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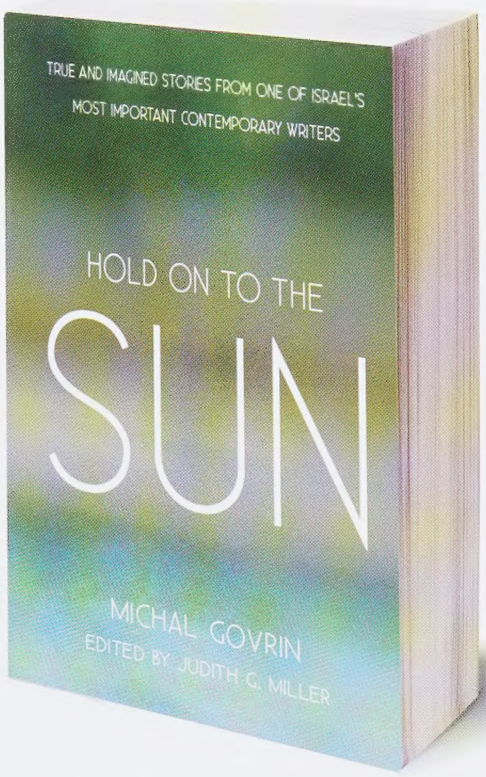
TRUE AND IMAGINED STORIES FROM ONE OF ISRAEL'S MOST IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY WRITERS
HOLD ON TO THE
SUN
MICHAL GOVRIN
EDITED BY JUDITH G. MILLER

HOLD ON TO THE SUN
MICHAL GOVRIN
Edited by Judith G. Miller

In this portrait of the artist as a young woman, Michal Govrin, one of Israel's most important contemporary writers, offers a kaleidoscope of stories and essays. Populated by mysterious and real people, each tale is in some way a search for meaning in a post-Holocaust world. Essays describe Govrin's visits to Poland as a young adult, where her mother survived a death camp but lost her first husband and child. In a multiplicity of voices, Govrin's haunting stories capture the depths of denial and the exuberance of youth.

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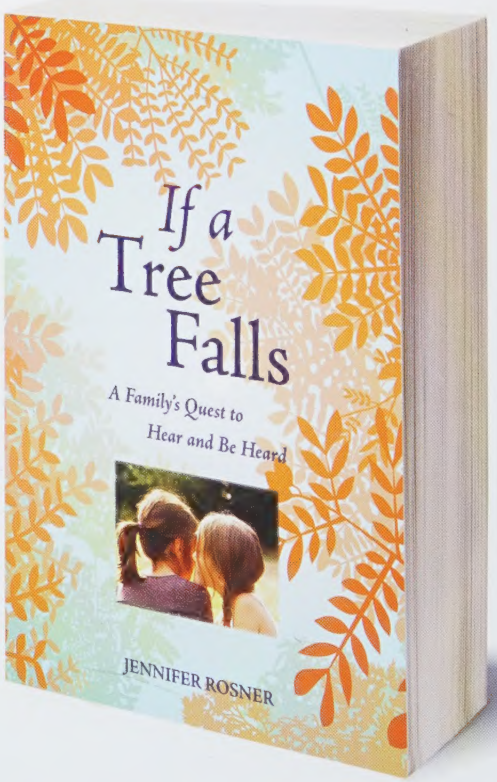

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A Family's Quest to Hear and Be Heard
JENNIFER ROSNER

"Deep and moving truths fall out of this enchanting memoir, as deafness becomes a means of exploring the grave obstacles we all face in knowing what it is like to be another."

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Lilith

fall 2010
vol. 35, no. 3

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

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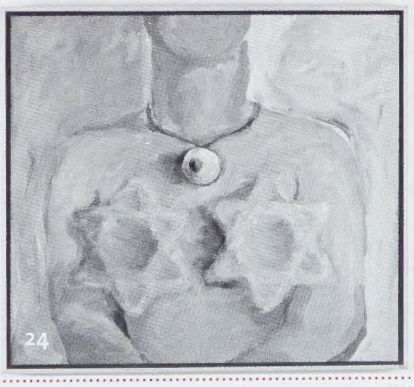

"Money is the bio-fuel that makes change possible." —Nessa Rapoport

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Lilith

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Dorothea Steinbruch? It's OK. I'd never heard of her before either. She lives in Brazil, and she's the only woman on a new list of the 50 wealthiest Jewish billionaires. We are led to ask: what have other women been doing while 49 of our male counterparts were prospering? Baking cookies? Nibbling madeleines?

I'm ambivalent about kitchens. Our kitchens are both indicators of social change and impediments to change. They've trapped people in roles of servitude, just as their modern iterations have liberated women from tedious and exhausting tasks. For the most part, our kitchens are the sites of non-income-producing efforts involving food (and often family), rarely fame and fortune. But despite the now almost-universal appeal—to men as well as women—of *patchke*-ing around in the kitchen (granite-counter-topped or nay), there's still a gender imbalance to kitchen work.

It's possible that my early feminist consciousness was formed in part by a bat mitzvah gift: my next-door neighbor, a Jewish woman much younger than my mother, a woman I admired and liked, intelligent and trying hard, gave me (no kidding) the Betty Crocker cookbook and wrote on its flyleaf, "This, more than anything, will make you and those you love happy." Even at age 13, I knew there was something screwy about the sentiment.

And yet that book, with its full-page color photograph of Baked Alaska, was seductive. I still make popovers using its recipe. But my ambivalence persists too. Kitchen work is often solitary and isolated, yet I love the quiet opportunity to focus on concrete tasks with finite ends. You have to make meals over and over again, but that's how you get proficient. On the third hand, there's the book that beckons to be read. And worse, the book that beckons to be written. You likely know the drill better than you know the name Dorothea Steinbruch (whose wealth, by the way, was inherited from her late husband): the planning, marketing, slicing, cooking; the eating. And don't forget the aesthetics of setting the scene, garnishing the platters....

But when the only reward is domestic and private, and not tied to the production of wealth, how do we value our labor?

Of course for some, there is a link between what goes on in the kitchen and financial gain. Mrs. Field and those cookies, Brownie Wise (the single mother who invented Tupperware parties and became the v.p. of the Tupper company). I've often ruminated about reviving the Yiddish term *balebuste*; now this kitchen wonder, mistress of making soup from a stone, has gone public. A new restaurant in Manhattan bears her name, albeit with a more phonetic spelling: Balaboosta. Similarly with Fania Lewando, the Vilna woman whose 1930s vegetarian restaurant, and the cookbook it inspired, are profiled in this issue.

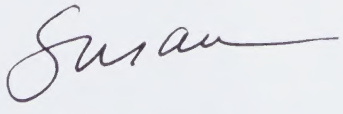
At the Lilith office our own pattern has evolved. Our daily editorial meeting has morphed into a communal potluck lunch. Someone brings quinoa with raisins, someone else a salad. Berries from a garden. Cookies. Yesterday it was raw zucchini strips so thin they looked like fettuccini. How did this foodiness come about? We like to eat and to cook—or at least cut up vegetables—and it seems useful to multitask: eating while editing. Typically, men who come to the office are surprised by the ritual. Women visitors not so much.

The complex gender politics of the kitchen are front and center in a new exhibition, "Counter Space: Design and the Modern Kitchen," at the Museum of Modern Art. Its centerpiece is an installation of the actual "Frankfurt Kitchen," designed in the 1920s by the architect Grete Schütte-Lihotzky as an efficient, hygienic workspace for public housing projects. There's even a chair, so that the solitary housewife could peel vegetables sitting down. The rest of this show is full of carefully designed iconic kitchen stuff, and photos, mostly by men, of kitchen scenes that suggest both shifting gender roles and consumerism. And it includes "Semiotics of the Kitchen," the brilliant 1975 video by artist Martha Rosler, who dons an apron and parodies a cooking show as she brandishes kitchen items—like a nutcracker and a rolling pin—with controlled fury. It's both hilarious and eerie. Maybe it's what the ideal housewife for whom the Frankfurt Kitchen was designed would have conveyed if she could have.

It seems useful to multitask: eating and editing.

Have we fetishized our kitchens? Are we expending more energy worrying about our kitchen appliances than about feeding the hungry, who are lining up outside those food pantries forced to close down early each day because the food has run out?

As my grandmother would say (in Yiddish): "Some people complain that the pearls are too thin, and some people complain that the soup is too thin."



Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor in Chief

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Check out the alluring array of one-of-a-kind items and experiences. Donate something unique and exciting for the auction. Many thanks, and happy bidding at
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VOICES

Traditionally the voice of a Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. These pages are for news about Jewish women in our own strong voices.

PHOTO BY JOAN ROTH

"It was a very cool thing to be a smart girl."

Elena Kagan, newly installed as a justice on the U. S. Supreme Court, speaking about the Hunter High School in New York City. From www.wnyc.org, August 31, 2010.

"We have created an Adoption Loan Program for Jewish couples or singles seeking to create a Jewish family through adoption. Adoption is enormously expensive, now costing anywhere from $20,000 to $40,000. Our program targets those who can afford to raise a child but who have trouble paying steep adoption expenses. Many adoptive parents exhaust their limited savings on fertility treatment, and even incur high-interest credit card debt. Our program makes creating a Jewish family through adoption affordable."

Shana Novick, Hebrew Free Loan Society Executive Director, asked to name the most unusual need for which HFLS has loaned money. From "Micro-Lending for 120 Years," NY Jewish Week, July 2, 2010

Are you really *sure* that there's nothing new under the sun? Check out items from the day's news, and then read what Lilith has said earlier on these very subjects. Treats await you at *www.Lilith.org/blog*.

"Girls, I've probably gotten the worst reviews of any human being on the planet. And here I am, walking and talking. … I'm not into kvetching, I'm into changing the world."

Artist **Judy Chicago**, interviewed by **Ariel Levy** in The New Yorker, August 9, 2010.

A Season for Jewish Women in Comedy

"Is **Betty White** Jewish?" my grandmother asked. No. "That's too bad," she said. At 88, White is best known for her roles on "The Golden Girls" and "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," and after 71 years in the business, has hosted one of the most hilarious episodes of Saturday Night Live. Would she be any funnier if she were Jewish, like **Molly Picon**, **Madeline Kahn**, **Bette Midler**, **Fran Drescher**, **Judy Gold**?

The caricature version of the Jewish female comic is that she is self-deprecating, gossips, and converses shamelessly about bodily functions. This season it looks like the real-life version matches the caricature. The autobiography by **Sarah Silverman** is titled *The Bedwetter*, and in "Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work," the new documentary on her career, **Joan Rivers** smirks at some backstage amenities and announces, "Once a Jew, always a Jew… I'm going in to clean that bathroom!" But perhaps Jewish comics are most marked by their ability to transform frustration into art, tears into laughter, and personal or historical oppression into temporary liberation from social norms.

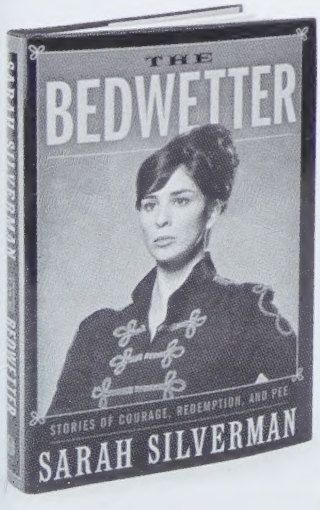
For the earlier models, like **Sophie Tucker** and **Fanny Brice**, comedy became a way to challenge "the strictures that hold us back," according to "Making Trouble," the 2007 film on Jewish women in comedy, produced by the Jewish Women's Archive. Representing a third generation, Sarah Silverman reveals that she chronically wet her bed until she was 16, and she fearlessly invites her audience to laugh with her. "Joining in their laughter saved me then. It continues to save me now." As Joan Rivers bluntly put it, "The anger fuels the comedy."

Silverman's hometown in New Hampshire was so dominated by Christians that she had to attend daycare at a convent. No joke. She recognized early on that Jewish jokes were a useful defense. Joan Rivers utilizes this weapon as well. In response to the poor behavior of an opponent on Celebrity Apprentice, Rivers quipped, "She can kiss my Jewish ass with her non-kosher pig lips." The ability to exaggerate an incongruity is immediately a recipe for comedy. **Gilda Radner** parodied for "Jewess Jeans" on "Saturday Night Live." Silverman created a viral YouTube music video of a young Jewish girl's plea for Santa to "Give the Jew Girl Toys," and she's proud of submitting a short story to the Penthouse Forum, the punch line revealing the name of its prostitute as Debbie Schwartz.

Comedy is not always safe. More recently, when Silverman released her 2009 YouTube video "Sell the Vatican, Feed the World," backlash criticized her as a Jew. She was called Pinocchio, advised to get a nose job, and told "Hitler had the right idea." However, she received mostly praise for "The Great Schlep," the video in which she instructed the youth of America to convince their Florida grandparents to vote for Obama. She jokingly credits herself with saving the world and prophesies that she may one day be the first Jewish President. Not female, Jewish. "Whatever I say, I should at least consider that some will view it through the filter of my Jewishness." At the 2009 Emmy Awards, the comedy actress gloated that she felt like a "Semitic Cinderella."

And while Rivers' work as a serious comic actress is sometimes overshadowed by commentary on her frequent plastic surgeries, her documentary, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, is expected to gross seven figures. Those numbers are impressively rare for an indie film, and Rivers is garnering premature Oscar nods as the film's popularity builds in mainstream cinemas. This may even be the season for older women in comedy, White included. Rivers swans, "I'm 75 years old and I haven't peaked yet."

AMANDA WALGROVE



"Art has the power to keep generating memory, to keep generating legacy, to keep history alive, so we don't repeat what was done in that incredibly cruel and horrible way in New Orleans."

Eve Ensler, speaking to **Amy Goodman** on the radio program "Democracy Now," August 26, 2010, about "Swimming Upstream," the performance she created with women's words and music from the experiences of Hurricane Katrina.

Oil Gushes, Trust Evaporates

For four years, Rabbi Myrna Matsa has been working in Louisiana and Mississippi. Matsa was sent down by the New York Board of Rabbis to counsel rabbis and other clergy who were on overload meeting the needs of populations devastated by Katrina. And then the BP well exploded. She tells Lilith editor in chief Susan Weidman Schneider what it's like now.

Lilith: In the wake of this second disaster, what's the worst thing you're seeing?
Rabbi Myrna Matsa: The oil spill was capped, but I don't know when the ripple effect will be capped. People will just not know whom to trust. After the losses of Katrina, promises came from government, from volunteers who made promises not kept. So with the BP oil spill, people along the coast already had distrust. I've seen in other situations—for example, in battered women—what the inability to trust does to people trying to rebuild.

Given this profound lack of trust, what can you do?
My big focus is on mental health. When Katrina hit, much of the coast evacuated—that was the safe thing to do—and those who left were absorbed into other communities. What people don't realize is that this meant the middle class too, including social workers and psychologists. There's a dearth now of mental health professionals. Housing, food, clothing—the basics are taken care of. But hardworking fishermen, the tourist industry, they are all suffering. The mental health issues are going to be significant. I'm like a matchmaker at times. I can see needs and try to bring resources to that area.

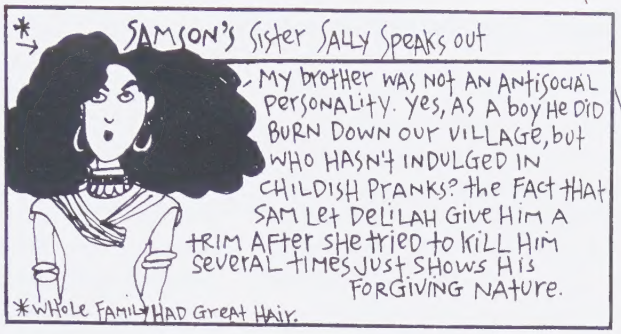
You've said Israelis are a big help.
Israelis have come in, and they are phenomenal! The Israeli Trauma Coalition, funded by New York UJA-Federation, deploys teams of Israel's experts on coping with the psychological impact of long-term violence all over the world. Jewish money came in to help in a very important way. Groups from Jerusalem and Kiryat Shmona have come to the Gulf Coast, and they've trained more than 450 people here in all sorts of professions and areas—all over Mississippi and Louisiana. They've reached about 600 kids in high school too.

My biggest concern is for the children. Children see their parents responding to what's going on. Children are not equipped to make healthy decisions for themselves. If we can help these children learn important skills for how to negotiate their emotions we will be helping them for the future, help them build resiliency. If not, 15 years down the road we will see repercussions. Kids will just be acting out their physicality. After Katrina, there were increased suicide attempts—and completed suicides—in kids. When the parents go to BP for claims, there aren't even toy areas or a place to play, or any positive presence. People are starting to talk about how to help the children when the parents are doing what they have to do to rebuild their lives.

FROM GREAT SMALL WORKS' PHOTO-MONTAGE NEWS SERIAL, *THE TOY THEATER OF TERROR AS USUAL, EPISODE #12: OCEAN AND DESERT.*

PHOTO BY LAURA AYLES

SAMSON SHOWED 3 SIGNS OF ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER... RECKLESSNESS, IMPULSIVENESS AND FIGHTING.
A BIBLICAL SIBLING DEFENDS HER BROTHER AGAINST A REVISIONIST PERSONALITY THEORY.


SAMSON'S SISTER SALLY SPEAKS OUT
MY BROTHER WAS NOT AN ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY. YES, AS A BOY HE DID BURN DOWN OUR VILLAGE, BUT WHO HASN'T INDULGED IN CHILDISH PRANKS? THE FACT THAT SAM LET DELILAH GIVE HIM A TRIM AFTER SHE TRIED TO KILL HIM SEVERAL TIMES JUST SHOWS HIS FORGIVING NATURE.
*WHOLE FAMILY HAD GREAT HAIR.

From **Nicole Hollander**'s "The Sylvia Chronicles: 30 Years of Graphic Misbehavior from Reagan to Obama."

You can own your own Hollander cartoon when you buy your Lilith canvas tote bag today! Go to www.Lilith.org

After seeing TV images of turtles drinking oil, one woman here said "I don't want my eight-year-old to watch the news anymore." But the issue is not to shield children, but to help them understand what is happening—and perhaps they will become advocates when they are adults.

You've been a congregational rabbi and you've done hospice work. What prepared you for the crisis intervention you're doing now?
I started here as pastoral counsel to rabbis and cantors, but my job immediately expanded. Because I was in so many diverse areas I could represent the Jewish community at the table, at the local level.

People think, "If I am having a hard time adjusting, it must just be me." One problem with disasters is that people feel isolated, and think there is no one around. And Hillels have come down, and Avodah, and Jewish Funds for Justice, and Nechama from Minneapolis. There have been so many different places where I heard people say, "I didn't know that Jews did that."

A Casting Call for JAPs

PRODUCTION COMPANY LOOKING FOR 'SUPER JAPPY' GROUPS OF FRIENDS!...GONE ARE THE DAYS WHERE BEING A JAP IS A BAD THING—TODAY JEWISH AMERICAN PRINCESSES ARE PROUD. THINK "JERSEY SHORE" MEETS "REAL HOUSEWIVES OF NEW JERSEY"—BUT CLASSIER. WE WANT BEAUTIFUL, FUN, OUTSPOKEN GROUPS OF JEWISH AMERICAN WOMEN.

We didn't make this up! It's the actual casting call that went out in May from Get Some Media, an L.A. company searching for Jewish women to star in a new reality television show.

A JAP reality series plays perfectly into the recent trend of ogling the (highly-edited and contrived) lives of wild "ethnic" youngsters. Last winter's smash-hit, "Jersey Shore," followed a group of "guido" Italian-Americans, and filming has recently begun on "K-Town," which is the same idea; just replace Italian with Asian.

In this context, a TV show about JAPs hardly sounds out of place. In fact, it sounds commercially viable. **Jenn Hoffman**, President of Get Some Media, seems to agree. According to Newsday.com, Hoffman said that "with the popularity of 'Jersey Shore' and me coming from Long Island, I thought there was an untapped gold mine, the one I grew up with, which are Jewish-American princesses."

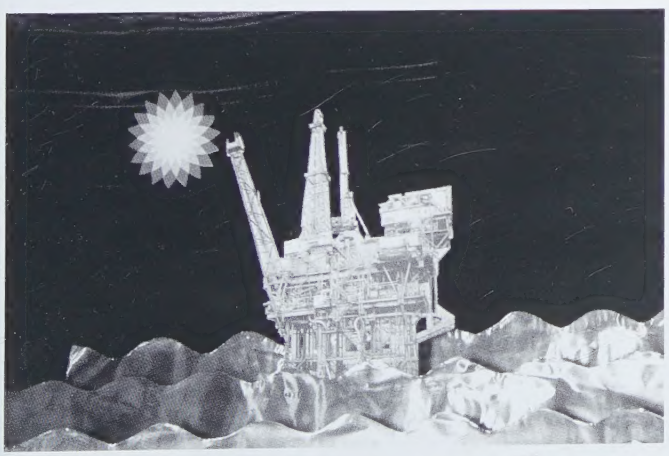
Why are Jewish women embracing a stereotype that has traditionally been viewed as pejorative? "Reality TV plays strongly on stereotypes," says anthropologist **Riv-Ellen Prell**. "It's the only way it can work." Ethnic stereotypes are well ingrained in American society, and the JAP label, with its focus on excessive consumption, nouveau-riche status, and overly demanding attitude, is no exception. According to Prell, Professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota and the author of essays on stereotypes, it represents "common American experiences attached to gender and ethnicity."

Women who embrace the Jewish American Princess label see this as reclamation of a once-negative term. Prell connects this to what she calls "the 'Sex and the City' phenomenon," defining the modern woman as one who is smart, sexy, and embraces excessive materialism.

While the casting call declares that being a JAP is something to be proud of, Prell disagrees, citing the stereotype's undeniably sexist and anti-Semitic undertones. JAP is a term used to marginalize Jewish women. By drawing on common stereotypes as its source material, reality television allows the audience to simultaneously sympathize with its subjects and be reviled by them. This is made easier when the subjects are "ethnic others."

Unlike "Sex and the City," which went to great lengths over its six-year run to give its characters nuance and depth, reality television gives the viewer no more than surface-level, typecast representations. What are the implications, then, when the characters are real people and the content is built around ethnic epithets?

EMMA GRAY



Flamenco's Unexpected Jewish Roots

On a stormy March evening, plaintive and edgy "aye ayes" emerge from the throat of a female flamenco singer, beckoning the New York audience to attention. **Leilah Broukhim**, a dancer, first sits beside the singer and guitarist, clapping her palms to the punchy rhythms. Then, without an obvious cue, Broukhim rises to perform a 10-minute improvised flamenco dance, moving from one exacting pose to the next, punctuated by foot stomps, finger manipulations, skirt swooshes and head tosses. The three artists are completely dependent on each other for the energy and direction of their ensemble performance.

The singer's initial call, known as a complaint, is used to synchronize pitch with the musicians. The tuning device, perhaps a practical application, is remarkable in its longing mournful tones, which bear an unmistakable kinship to the Muslim call to prayer.

It stands to reason that flamenco—the national dance, music and pride of Spain—would have its roots in Islam, given the Iberian Peninsula's eight-century domination by Islamic Arab governments (from 800 AD to 1500 AD). Continue listening, however, and the minor

Rhythms and melodies from Inquisition-era Sephardic folklore

chords and rhythms evoke a particularly expressive Kol Nidre or Sephardic music sung in Ladino, a Romance language influenced by Spanish and Aramaic. It turns out, in fact, that flamenco is a melding of Jewish, Arab and Roma traditions. Today Broukhim is well aware of the Jewish inflections in Flamenco, the dance she has practiced for the last 14 years—ever since her New York City high-school Spanish teacher brought her to a performance. "It was so expressive!" Broukhim recalls. "It was so unfamiliar and theatrical and inspiring. It really moved me."

It in fact moved Broukhim to Spain, where she has lived and danced for the past 10 years. In that time, she learned that flamenco began as a folk tradition in the region of Spain known as Andalusia. The highly collaborative mix of dance, guitar and, eventually, lyric song originated primarily in the homes of Sephardic Jews and Arab Muslims in the 15th century, according to **Meira Goldberg**, a dance historian and flamenco teacher based in New York City. Those of Moorish descent brought a legacy of dance and choreography, Goldberg explains, "and they expressed their feelings with the voice breakings and adornments used when they sang from the Koran."

In addition to the underlying flamenco sounds, many of which are derived from Jewish song, there are a few palos—flamenco styles characterized by unique rhythms, melodies and motifs—that can be linked directly to Sephardic folklore. In the late 1700s, the Roma (still called gypsies by many in Spain) were first thought to have contributed to flamenco culture by interpreting the existing tradition through their own experience and expertise. And because the Roma were cut off from nearly all professions except for bullfighting and flamenco, Goldberg says, they infused their dance with gestures and foot rhythms that conjured the toreador and his charging bulls.

When Broukhim, a Sephardic Jew of Persian descent, arrived in Spain, she was so deeply immersed in flamenco culture—its music, intensity and highly social community—that she didn't think much about the Jewish connection. Then, a few years ago, a writer asked if she would participate in a promotional video for Casa Sefarad-Israel, a Madrid-based nonprofit studying the legacy of Sephardic culture in Spain and fostering a better understanding of Jewish culture there.

While filming the piece, Broukhim's interest was piqued, and she began to research the history of Spanish Jews as well as her own ancestors. "It woke up this whole connection and it's how I got on my path," says Broukhim, whose family, expelled from Spain in the sixteenth century, made its way to what is now modern-day Iran. Her father moved to the United States in 1963 (her mother is Italian) and, as Broukhim sees it, she is completing the family's historic, cultural and geographic circle by returning to Spain once again.

Broukhim will direct and dance an interpretation of this journey on November 4th at New York's 92nd St. Y, in "Traces: The Story of a Sephardic Woman Through Time." Broukhim says her family's tale and struggle have allowed her to see Spain as much more than the birthplace and center of flamenco. "Now I kind of feel the connection. I do feel my ancestors came from here. There's a reason why I'm here."

ELIZABETH S. BENNETT

Everyone agrees, uncritically, that being disabled means sex is scarce. Those assumptions are loaded with prejudice and myth, and some debunking would be in order. Many of us are having sex. We choose both disabled and non-disabled partners. We come in straight, lesbian, bi, gay and trans varieties. We're at it—get over it.

Naomi Jacobs, "Disabled people do have sex lives. Get over it." Guardian.co.uk August 23, 2010

"Women do almost as well as men today, as long as they don't have children."

Jane Waldfogel, quoted in "A Market Punishing to Mothers," New York Times, August 4, 2010.

For Any Jew Who Doesn't Feel Kosher Enough

Baxter, the Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher, a book for children 4 to 8, opens with Baxter learning about the joys of Shabbat but hearing that—being a non-kosher animal—he cannot participate. After gorging on kosher pickles, downing five loaves of raisin challah and trying to pass for a cow, he meets a generous woman rabbi who tells him, that "everyone is welcome at Shabbat dinner."

The book closes with the pair enjoying the meal together.

Laurel Snyder, author of *Baxter*, didn't always focus on Judaism in her children's books, which include the hilarious, creepy-but-not-too-scary picture book *Inside the Slidy Diner*; the adventure of a girl searching for her lost mother in *Up and Down the Scratchy Mountains*; and *Any Which Wall*, a fantasy. Two years ago, Boca Raton-based librarian **Heidi Estrin** asked why she didn't write for Jewish kids. Snyder told Lilith, "I realized then that I had a snobbish idea that most Jewish books for kids weren't very good, very artful or funny. I think I was afraid for my books to get lumped into a club with educational, religious books. So it was like a dare...to see if I could do better."

What Snyder, 36, came up with in response reflects the progressive and multifaceted Jewish community she knew growing up. Her father was a founding member of the Bolton Street Synagogue in Baltimore, a congregation with "people who represented all kinds of Jewish worlds—from every denomination....[T]here were gay families, and Orthodox members, and art students, and political radicals, and intermarried couples...." Snyder's background informed the 2006 anthology she edited, *Half/Life: Jew-ish Tales from Interfaith Homes*, essays by and about people in families with one Jewish and one non-Jewish parent. "Picture books feel more like poems to me," says Snyder, who has also published several books of poetry, "and so far I've tried to push limits with them. Make them odd, surprising. But *Baxter* is also a Jewish book, and with my Jewish writing, for kids and grownups too, I feel like I'm writing to the future. To a diverse community. A community that doesn't look like it used to.

"These issues are complicated for all of us...I don't think Baxter is all that edgy. It's about inclusion, about welcoming. That's a pretty basic Jewish value!" The book's conclusion draws on her experience of "... having felt excluded sometimes, from the more institutional world, because of all the things I didn't *know*. That's the thing with this book that I want people to understand: Baxter isn't excluded because people don't like him, or even because he's a pig. Baxter's excluded because *he* doesn't ask the right questions, because he needs more information! And because someone makes an assumption."

Since delving into the world of Jewish children's literature in earnest, Snyder reports happily that her preconceptions about the genre were unfounded, "...I was wrong. There are some amazing Jewish picture books out there. More every year!" In addition to *Baxter, the Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher* and her forthcoming middle-grade novel, *Penny Dreadful* (both available this fall), her Yiddish board book for children—*Nosh, Schlep, Schluff*—will be out in January.

MAYA GOTTFRIED

CORRECTION: In Lilith's Summer 2010 issue, art on the ceiling of Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem should have been attributed to Zoe Pawlak.

June 11, 1967—2:00 A.M. At the door stood an army representative, the visitor every Israeli soldier's family dreads.

A Knock at the Door in the Darkness of Night

by ZIVA BAKMAN-FLAMHAFT

During my latest trip to Israel, in July 2010, I participated in the Gilad Shalit march from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Like other Israelis, I wanted to protest his abduction, and demand that the International Red Cross be allowed to see him. For readers unfamiliar with his name: Gilad Shalit is the Israeli soldier abducted by Hamas in June 2006 in a cross-border raid. At the time of his kidnapping he was not yet 20.

Since Shalit's capture, the Israeli public has been consumed by his ordeal and the enduring torments of his family. As a consequence, events were organized by private Israeli citizens to observe the fourth year of his captivity. The events were intended to pressure the Israeli government to do more than it has been doing to get him home, and to direct the world's attention to Shalit's inhumane imprisonment, which defies accepted international standards. The highlight was an Israeli Philharmonic "Outcry to the World" concert that took place near the Gaza border, conducted by Zubin Mehta with Israel's foremost singer, Shlomo Artzi, who appealed for Shalit's return in a song titled "That's All We Want."

The Shalit events occurred two months after the late-May flotilla incident, when Israeli commandos boarded the Turkish ship Mavi Marmara, which was part of a flotilla intended to breach Israel's controversial naval blockade of Gaza. After being attacked by "peace activists" on board the ship, the Israeli commandos opened fire and killed nine Turks.

Because of the biased way in which international public opinion has attempted to delegitimize the Jewish state following the flotilla event—not unlike the imbalanced way the world has been treating Israel's right to defend itself in relation to Gaza—Israelis felt especially isolated this past summer, viewing recent international responses as nothing less than the continuation of centuries-old anti-Semitism.

I have always understood Israel's sense of isolation, but I felt it even more so this past summer, as I arrived in Israel from Poland, where I stopped on my way to the country of my birth to trace my paternal family's roots, and to see, as a Jew, Birkenau and Auschwitz.

Nothing I have studied, read, seen, not Yad Vashem, not even my previous visit to Terezienstadt, prepared me for Birkenau and Auschwitz—for their enormity and for the efficiency with which the Nazis ran their death-oiled industry.

What shocked me the most was that not even the minutest detail was left to chance: not the place where the trains would first stop, where victims would initially be "selected," where they first undressed, where they were first disinfected and shaved, their hair used by the Nazis to manufacture fabric; not where they were disinfected for the second time, where their clothing was first fumigated, where their clothing was fumigated for the second

time, where their clothing and belongings were collected, sorted and stored, where they would die by Zyclon B poisoning gas, where their corpses would be burned.

It took merely 25 minutes from the time the human cargo arrived at Birkenau for those "selected" to become ash. And Birkenau was only one death camp where Jews were slaughtered while the world kept silent. It is little wonder, I thought, that Israelis call themselves "*Am Levadad Yishkon*"—The People that Dwell Alone.

Because of my own experience with a knock at my door in the darkness of night, the image that most captured my attention during the Gilad Shalit events was that of his mother, Aviva. Though she has not been as visible in the Israeli media as Gilad's father Noam, who has become a well-known advocate for his son's cause, her poise conveyed unforgettable strength.

I too had known strength. I had believed myself to be a shy woman. But a year after tragedy struck me at age 23, I surprised myself by becoming an activist, resisting my government's plan to terminate monthly pensions to childless war widows. Believing the policy to be discriminatory and arbitrary, I campaigned against it, writing to ministers, meeting with parliament members, conducting interviews and threatening to take the case to the Israeli High Courts of Justice if necessary. My activism was completely new to me, but not to my sense of justice.

To my disappointment, my attempts to mobilize my peers—the 128 childless widows of the Six Day War—were futile. Some of us moved back to our parents' homes, others were reluctant to campaign against a government still glorying in an extraordinary military victory.

Twenty-seven years later, as part of a post-doctorate project, I met and interviewed other brave women: mothers, wives, widows, daughters and sisters who told me their stories of coping with unbearable loss or caring for maimed loved ones. Their narratives drained me: the grief of the mother who could not come to terms with the loss of her child; the two-fold agony of the mother of a severely injured soldier, herself having been sexually abused by her army case-worker; the war widow whose teenage daughter committed suicide to be with her father. I interviewed the mother of a soldier missing in action for 15 years and presumed (but not declared) dead by the Israeli authorities. She worried that if her son somehow read that she'd revealed to me he had asthma, he'd become angry with her.

These heroines spoke about females experiencing war differently from men—in part because most of us do not participate in the executive planning of wars or in combat, in part because of gendered social conditioning. Male soldiers, they believed, have little time, natural inclination, or need to worry about life back home, whereas most females are back home, split between

assuming new civilian responsibilities and worrying about the unknown and unthinkable. And although females and males share the burdens of war, society allots the glory to male warriors, while women are left in the rear.

In November 1993, six weeks after the Oslo Accord was signed between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.),

Although females and males share the burdens of war, society allots the glory to male warriors; women are left in the rear.

I attended a conference on Women and Change in the Middle East; I was to deliver a paper on the Oslo Accord. Over the course of two days, Palestinian women spoke repeatedly of their suffering as Palestinians and as women under more than a quarter-century of Israeli occupation, and their words fell on sensitive ears, including my own. But the suffering of Israeli women was not mentioned even once. So I began my talk, but then on impulse shoved my paper aside.

With intimacy and pain, I told them about the knock at my door in the middle of the night, and the grim tale that followed. I told them about my shock, my despair, and even of my own near-death in a hospital where I stayed for a month in a desperate attempt to save my pregnancy during an illness. An illness, I believed, related to my shock and grief, and my near-death related to the fact that my physical complaints fell on deaf ears—the doctors could only see a crazed woman reeling from a tragedy.

At one point I broke down, not when I spoke of Yigal, but when I disclosed to the audience my despairing feelings of guilt for losing his child and his parents' grandchild, for he could never father another. I heard gasps and saw the faces in the audience; many looked sincerely moved.

When the presentation ended, I was surrounded by women, most of them Arab. They shared their surprise at finding me sensitive and harmless. All wanted to hear more about my ordeal.

One woman, an Iraqi psychiatrist, brushed my hand accidentally and then deliberately touched it again.

"Your skin in so soft," she said, dismayed.

"You seem startled," I said. "What did you expect?"

"Rough skin, like the image we Arabs have of all Israelis."

For a brief moment we were all united by our shared fate. There were no distinctions between powerful and powerless, occupier and occupied. We were equally human.

As for my own narrative [below], though uniquely mine, it cannot be very different from other stories of women who have suffered loss and grief as a result of war, whenever or wherever war takes place. In this way, my account is timeless and universal, revealing that the true face of war is very intimate.

I was rather calm in the spring of 1967, though like everyone else in Israel, my mood was strained by a rapidly deteriorating political situation. The tension began on April 7, 1967, when Israel, responding to intensive Syrian shelling, downed six Soviet-made, Syrian Mig-21 fighter jets rumored to be flown in Israel's direction by Russian pilots who trained the Syrian air force.

On May 18, caught in the fury, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser ordered the United Nations Emergency Force to leave Sinai. Alarmed, Yitzhak Rabin, then Israel's Chief of Staff, declared a partial mobilization. But my husband Yigal was not called.

Five days later, Nasser moved six army divisions into Sinai, and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli navigation, a move that Israel considered an act of war. In response, Rabin declared a general mobilization.

To his apprehension and my relief, Yigal was still not recruited. *Perhaps he won't be called at all*, I thought, since he was recovering from a severe case of adult chicken-pox. But by May 30, Jordan joined a defense pact with Egypt and Syria, while Nasser continued to explicitly threaten to destroy the Jewish State. On June 4, Iraq joined the military pact too, sending its own division to Jordan. On June 5, seeing a joint offensive imminent, Israel launched a preemptive strike; thus began the Six Day War.

The victory was stunning, the country jubilant, especially after the trying month immediately preceding the war when, as a nation, we Israelis felt isolated and abandoned, bringing many of us in touch with the fear of total of annihilation, a trepidation that went back to our experiences of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. But not all of us were celebrating.

I was still relaxed on the day Yigal left for war. Our farewell was neither more nor less poignant than any other loving couple's. But a few hours after we had parted, my phone rang. It was Yigal, alerting me that he had forgotten his automatic rifle at home, instructing me to deliver it to a nearby intersection, where his unit was passing through on its way south.

He looked composed as he jumped out of the military truck wearing his field-uniform. Once again we said our goodbyes, this time more intensely. I stood motionless for a long time after the truck became smaller and smaller, disappearing in the distance. I still wonder if what I felt was premonition or ordinary fear under extraordinary circumstances.

As the atmosphere in the region became increasingly tense, I moved my parents to my apartment in Ramat-Gan, because there was no adequate bomb shelter in the old Tel Aviv neighborhood where they lived.

We were instructed to tape and cover our windows and color our car-lights in dark-blue paint. Only a few days earlier Egyptian aircraft were detected flying toward our borders. A blackout was necessary to prevent the enemy from navigating to their targets by the aid of city lights. Driving in my neighborhood to buy supplies, I absentmindedly hit another moving car. The other driver and I, two civilians in the rear, exchanged information in a comradely way.

"I'll call you in a few days, when I have my estimate," the driver said. *Good*, I thought. *Things are still pretty normal. Perhaps there won't be a war after all.* I was wrong.

By the end of June 5, the war's first day, Egyptian and Syrian air forces were practically destroyed. On June 7, Jerusalem was in Israeli hands after a fierce, costly battle. On the radio, the quivering voice of Moshe Hovav, a seasoned announcer, was shouting, "The Temple Mount is in our hands," while in the background a shofar was blowing. It was the first time I saw my father, a truly secular man, cry.

The country was euphoric when on Friday, the ninth of June, I received a call from my aunt Esther. Her husband Yaakov, my father's youngest brother, had bumped into Yigal a day earlier in Sinai. It is not unusual in Israel for two generations to be serving at the same time, especially in times of war.

"They promised each other to call home if they could, and send their regards. Yigal wants you to know that he is doing well and that you need not worry about him. Just take care of yourself. He thinks of you and the baby." She transmitted his message.

"I received three postcards from him so far," I said, "but I do not know where his brigade is. Any indication of that was blacked out, censored by the military." The call lifted my mood, for since we had said our second goodbye I had a nagging feeling that I would not see him again.

"Yaki"—that was the nickname my aunt used for her husband—"said he looked well," she continued. But by the time I received that call, unbeknownst to my aunt, this was no longer true. The war was practically over when my doorbell rang at two in the morning on Sunday, the eleventh of June, waking up my parents and me. It was the ring every family dreads. At the door stood an Army representative; ironically, the same City-Major I regularly saw during my own military service, which I had completed three years earlier.

Needing no time to grasp the meaning of the visit, I was relieved to hear that Yigal was only injured. But I became alarmed when the officer asked me to get dressed quickly.

"There is no time to waste," the City-Major said sympathetically.

I dressed speedily, holding my sandals in my hands as I ran down the stairs. The City-Major rushed me into a waiting taxi that was to take me to Rambam hospital in Haifa, where the Golan-Heights wounded had been taken. As luck would have it, I knew the taxi-driver too from my days in the Prime Minister's office in Tel-Aviv. He somberly nodded in recognition. On her terrace on the floor below mine, my neighbor Ora stood crying. She should not be crying, not yet, I thought, irritated.

My mother joined me on my trip to the hospital, leaving my father behind. The ride, less than two hours long, seemed endless, the silence unbearable. When I arrived at the hospital, the doctor greeting me tried to prevent me from seeing Yigal, who had suffered burns over 92 percent of his body—the result of a direct Syrian hit on his armored vehicle.

Apparently, upon arriving there some 36 hours earlier, he had asked the doctors not to inform me about his injury because I was three months pregnant. Perhaps he felt that he would quickly recover.

"It would be better for the baby and you," the doctor suggested, "if you do not enter his room." Not comprehending what that meant, I demanded to see Yigal at once.

Having little choice, the doctor directed me, and then followed me. On my way I passed a darkened room where I could hear what sounded like loud, short hiccups. Not imagining that Yigal might be in the dark, I kept walking ahead, but then I no longer heard the doctor's footsteps and turned around. He was standing outside that room. When I approached, he asked if I was still adamant about seeing Yigal. Wasting no time, I walked inside.

There, in a darkened room, underneath a tube-like device placed on a bed, lay an unrecognizable, naked, hairless, charred, listless patient, desperately gasping for air. Screaming, I insisted that a terrible mistake must have been made. That burnt man could not be the tall, strong, handsome, 28-year-old redhead I was married to, the man who had so many plans for his own future and the future of his growing family. I fainted into my mother's arms as I managed to utter, "Don't let his mother see him like this."

A day earlier, it turned out, he had volunteered to be among the force that was brought from Sinai to breach into Syria from Givat Ha'em (Mother Hill) near Kefar Sold, in northern Israel.

One the radio, the quivering voice of the seasoned announcer was shouting, "The Temple Mount is in our hands," while in the background a shofar was blowing. It was the first time I saw my father, a truly secular man, cry.

Facing fierce fire, his vehicle was hit at the bottom of the hill. Only the driver survived, with minor injuries to his hands. Yigal managed to jump out, engulfed in flames; the four others burnt instantly.

Outside Yigal's room on a nearby bench a woman was sobbing uncontrollably. I could not determine whether she was weeping because she heard my screams or because she too was unable to recognize her loved one. I would never forget the glimpse of that anonymous woman, nor would I forget the sight of Yigal's scorched body or the choking sound of his last breaths.

I was taken to a nearby room, where the doctor tended to me. When I regained some of my composure, alone with my mother, I cried to her: "We'll sell our apartment and everything else we own, to have the best plastic surgeons to give Yigal a face."

"*Mamale*, no one could live like that," my mother replied, addressing me with the affectionate Yiddish epithet. The taxi took us back, together with Yigal's mother. She did see him briefly. His father remained with him till the end, which did not take much longer. In the taxi the silence was roaring.

Ora was still on her terrace when my mother and I arrived home; my sister already there with her father-in-law. Her husband, who fought with the Central Command near Jerusalem, was still on reserve-duty. My father had called her, and my aunts and uncles, after I had left with my mother for the hospital.

"He is in critical condition," I cried to my sister, whose eyes were covered with dark sunglasses. Her father-in-law was quietly sobbing. Moments later the phone rang.

"What funeral arrangement do you want? Is the Army taking care of it?" Gila, my sister-in-law asked.

"What funeral are you talking about? He is alive!" I claimed impatiently.

"I am sorry, I did not know that," Gila replied, and hung up the phone. Seconds later it rang again.

Gila said softly, "He is not."

***I am alone*, I thought in panic. Not *he is gone*, but *I am alone*.** About him being gone, that did not register. Not for a long time. And the baby—*what about the baby?*

In the other room my sister conferred with my obstetrician over the phone, telling him the horrible news. From my opened front door I caught a glimpse of my neighbor and her husband silently climbing the stairs, their baby daughter in her father's arms. She had stayed with her mother during the war; he had just returned. They looked morbid. They saw my sister on my terrace with her dark sunglasses. They figured it out.

Soon my apartment was filled with aunts and uncles. A few hours later, Yigal's brother appeared, having been called from the front. In the room there was no dry eye. And in the corner grocery store, my neighbors were whispering that the silence emanating from our home was worse than a thousand screams. ■

Ziva Bakman-Flamhaft is a writer and a lecturer in Political Science at Queens College/CUNY. This essay is adapted from War Widow, the memoir she is completing.

AGE

by GIGI MARKS

Splitting your skin and
stepping out of it—reptile, insect-like—
is just one way of getting older.
I see the lizard, snake, beetle
that I could become
in rough patches on my hands
and knees, and how I might join
them, creepers and crawlers,
as I get closer to the ground.

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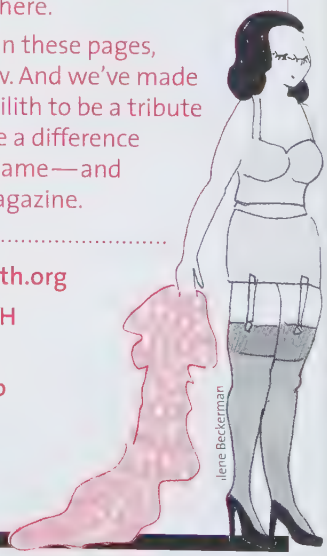
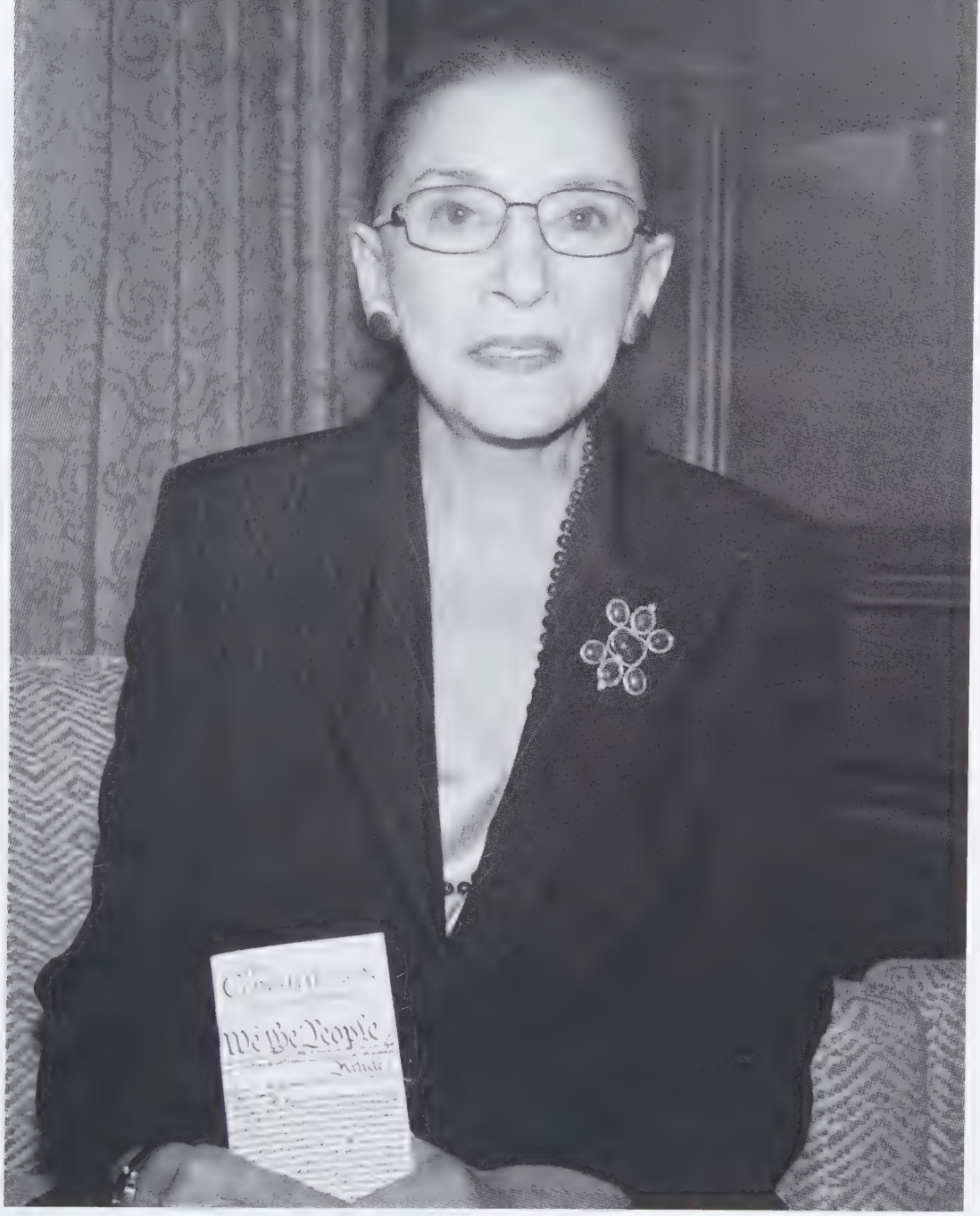
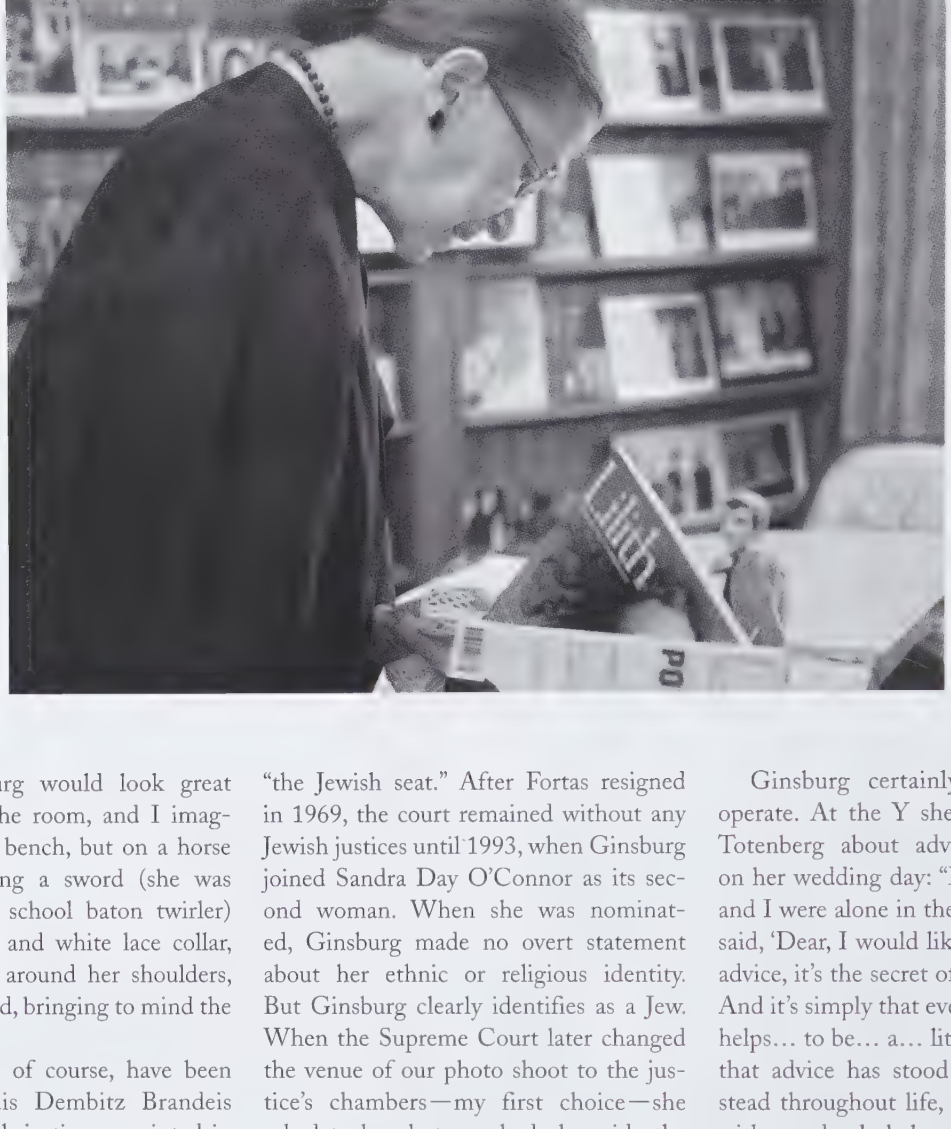




AN INDISPENSABLE MEMBER OF THE SUPREMES

JOAN ROTH VISITS RUTH BADER GINSBURG IN WASHINGTON

The walls of the Supreme Court's reception room in Washington, D.C., are lined with portraits of the Court's former chief justices, all powerful white men. This was the formal setting in which I was first told I could photograph Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the court's first Jewish female justice, named by Forbes magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential women.



Justice Ginsburg would look great at the center of the room, and I imagined her not on a bench, but on a horse (she rides), twirling a sword (she was a champion high school baton twirler) in her black robe and white lace collar, an American flag around her shoulders, blowing in the wind, bringing to mind the biblical Deborah.

Jewish justices, of course, have been here before. Louis Dembitz Brandeis was the first Jewish justice, appointed in 1916. Brandeis was followed by Benjamin Cardozo, Felix Frankfurter, Arthur Goldberg and Abe Fortas, each filling, consecutively, what became known as "the Jewish seat." After Fortas resigned in 1969, the court remained without any Jewish justices until 1993, when Ginsburg joined Sandra Day O'Connor as its second woman. When she was nominated, Ginsburg made no overt statement about her ethnic or religious identity. But Ginsburg clearly identifies as a Jew. When the Supreme Court later changed the venue of our photo shoot to the justice's chambers—my first choice—she asked to be photographed alongside the mezuza given to her by students who'd visited her from the Orthodox Shulamith School for Girls in Brooklyn. "They asked good questions and they really wanted the answers," she told me.

Ginsburg has said she carries a copy of the Constitution with her. I blurted out, "It's my favorite document, that and the Torah." "Only the Torah?" Ginsburg shot right back. "What about the Talmud? What about the Mishnah?" Her quick comeback naming the texts codifying Jewish law certainly indicate the staying power of Ginsburg's early Jewish education (at the East Midwood Jewish Center in Brooklyn). "I have the good fortune of coming from a culture that prides learning, that thrives on arguing," Ginsburg told a sell-out audience at New York's 92St Y in 2008. "I am tremendously fortunate to be part of that heritage."

Ginsburg certainly knows how to operate. At the Y she told NPR's Nina Totenberg about advice she'd received on her wedding day: "My mother–in-law and I were alone in the bedroom, and she said, 'Dear, I would like to give you some advice, it's the secret of a happy marriage. And it's simply that every now and then it helps… to be… a… little… deaf.' I found that advice has stood me in such good stead throughout life, not just in dealing with my dearly beloved spouse, but with my colleagues at the court."

With Elena Kagan sworn in as the 112th justice this August, there are a historic three women on the court, and this may be a tipping point. We know from studies of how boards work that when one-third of a decision-making body is female there's an opportunity for significant gender progress on any issue the board addresses.

While I was photographing, Ginsburg told the information officer accompanying us that she has no plans to retire soon, that she intends to stay on the court at least as long as Brandeis did. (He served for 20 years to Ginsburg's current 17.) Good news for all of us. As Michelle Goldberg wrote in the Daily Beast recently, "For feminists she is irreplaceable. She needs to stick around as long as she can." ■

PHOTOS BY JOAN ROTH, WITH THANKS TO JONGCHUL LEE

"My mother's advice was always to 'be independent and be a lady.' By being a lady she meant not to allow emotions that waste time—like jealousy and remorse—to get in your way, and not to worry about what has already happened. I hope my mother would be happy that I followed her advice."

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in an interview by NPR's Nina Totenberg at the 92 StY in New York, January 21, 2008.

VIRTUALLY JEWISH.

Whereby a Quirky Online World Inspires Real-Life Jewish Engagement

Jews have found an unlikely place for rebirth: online—in Second Life. Recently spotted at SL Synagogue were Jewish avatars (Javatars) Shmoo Snook, the rabbit who types with a Yiddish accent, and GruvenReuven Greenberg, decked out in Grateful Dead tzitzit....

In despair about ever finding that hipster shul? Get your Javatar on it.

by PATRICIA AVERBACH

Through the millennia Jews have created vital, supportive communities in myriad unlikely locations. So it was not surprising that when I wandered into the three-dimensional, computer-generated virtual world called Second Life, I found not only Second Life Synagogue, but a virtual "mitzvah mobile" already parked around the corner.

Second Life allows users to fall through their computer screens into a richly rendered world where they can interact with objects and other people in a surprisingly fluid and natural way through the mediation of an avatar—a virtual representation of oneself. It's a varied environment with many of the same charms and opportunities, temptations and pitfalls, as real life. When first entering Second Life, some avatars simply enjoy the scenery, visiting virtual cities and museums like tourists anywhere. Others spend their first weeks shopping to upgrade their avatar's wardrobe and appearance. Some head directly for the sex clubs, where they spend their "second lives" in an orgy of virtual sex.

The more fanciful might recreate themselves as small furry beings or fairies. But most people, interestingly, fashion second lives not terribly dissimilar from their real-life identities: The politically active join groups that promote real-life causes; the socially conscious work for sustainable energy or accessible healthcare; sailors join sailing clubs; actors find theaters; and nice Jewish girls do what they always do when they move to a new neighborhood. Join a synagogue.

I joined Second Life Synagogue in September 2008, just after the High Holy Days. Membership was free and no one hit me up for a contribution to the building fund, although there was

PHOTOS BY PATRICIA AVERBACH

an impressive structure that I imagined had been built and paid for by someone. I later learned that Second Life buildings cost almost nothing, but virtual land can be expensive, and, as in real life, there is no avoiding taxes. The latter are called "tiers" in SL, and they're payable to Linden Labs, the real-life company in San Francisco that keeps all the invisible cogs and levers moving. Tiers are payable in "lindens," the Second Life currency which trades for real-life U.S. dollars (as well as euros, yen or pounds) at the current exchange rate of 245 lindens to the U.S. dollar. I discovered that the monthly tier for the virtual land where the synagogue sits (as well as the community acreage around it, harboring such structures as, for example, seasonal sukkahs in a courtyard) is $195 U.S. dollars.

As soon as I joined Second Life Synagogue, blue note-cards began appearing in the upper-right-hand corner of my computer screen inviting me to attend virtual candle-lighting ceremonies on Friday afternoons, telling me that I still had time to enter the virtual sukkah-building contest, that Fish Fry Bingo would be playing a raunchy, Jewish-content concert live at The Ark, and that I could study Rashi at Yeshiva Modim with GruvenReuven Greenberg on Tuesday evenings.

I tore through my clothing inventory (an avatar's virtual closet) until I found a modest skirt with a coordinating sweater, a pair of fashionable boots, and a tasteful pair of gold earrings—all items that I had acquired free at one of the many shops catering to new SL residents. Once I had my avatar dressed, I teleported to my first Second Life event. (N.B. To "teleport," I clicked on the small blue box marked "map" at the bottom of my screen. A menu of landmarks appeared and I clicked on "Second Life Synagogue." Immediately another box appeared asking if I'd like to teleport to this location. I clicked "teleport" and my screen went black. I could hear the sound of air rushing past as a blue horizontal bar began moving across the screen to let me know I was nearing my destination. As soon as the bar reached the far side of the screen, the lights flashed back on and I could see my avatar standing in the synagogue.) About a dozen avatars were already gathered at the back of the shul where five sets of candles were ablaze, having been lit by avatars from earlier time zones.

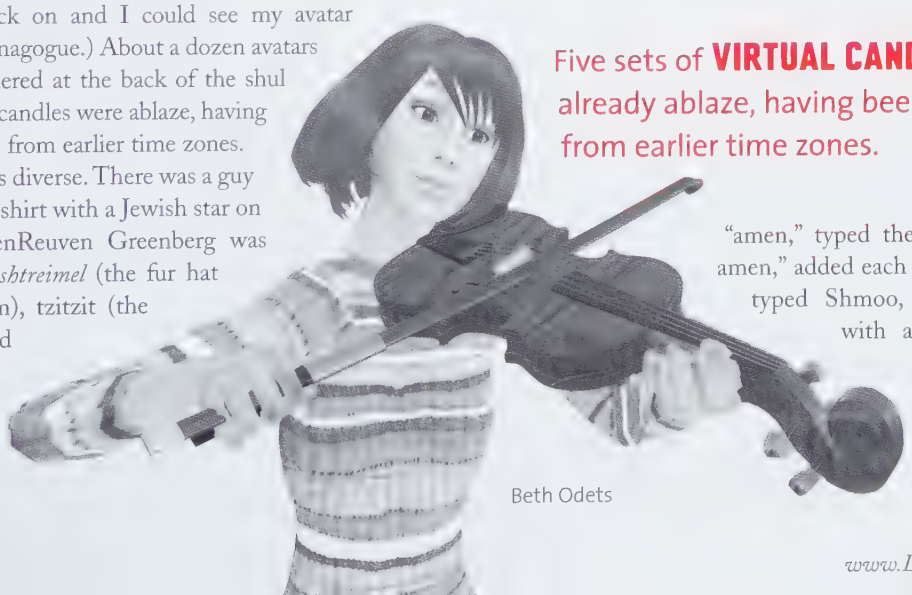
The crowd was diverse. There was a guy in shorts and a T-shirt with a Jewish star on the front; GruvenReuven Greenberg was there in a black *shtreimel* (the fur hat worn by Hasidim), tzitzit (the traditional fringed garment), and a Grateful Dead shirt; and Jieux Shepherd was dressed in jeans, a T-shirt, and a Groucho Marx nose, moustache and glasses. One female avatar was dressed for a Japanese tea ceremony, and several others were wearing what might charitably be called "club clothes," so skimpy they were virtually naked. An angel with enormous wings was hogging more than her share of available space, while Shmoo Snook, a dapper but diminutive rabbit, was heckling a guy in a cowboy hat. (N.B. If you have a microphone and a headset, you can participate in live-voice conversations that can be heard by everyone in the room; if you don't, you can type comments in your chat box that will appear on the bottom of the screen for everyone to see. Private conversations may be conducted in IM or via SL phone calls.) I stood there in my Hadassah-lady getup feeling more conspicuous than I ever had in my life.

The conversation kept returning to a single overriding concern, "Where's Beth? Has anyone seen Beth? Is Beth coming?" Comments were made in a free-for-all of typing and live voice, the banter friendly, teasing, and often profane. Someone had just proposed that if Beth didn't show, we could simply "pretend" to light the candles—Beth was the only one who knew how to make the virtual candles actually flicker and glow—when a petite, dark-haired avatar wearing a plaid shirt and overalls landed on top of the lady in the flowered kimono. Awkward entrances are a common Second Life occurrence.

Beth apologized for being late. One of her kids had been rushed to the emergency room because of a real-life mishap, but she'd made it back in time to bless the virtual candles with us. (Actually, this was only one of the six virtual-candle lightings she presides over each Friday, allowing observant avatars from different time zones to participate without violating the Sabbath.) Beth greeted several of the congregants, reminded us that she'd be playing a bluegrass concert in The Ark—the neighborhood hot spot—at 8:00 SLT (Second Life Time—otherwise known as Pacific Standard Time), then streamed the music that accompanies the blessing over the candles.

The room grew silent and respectful as the angel, the cowboy, the rabbit, the disco queens, and the Hadassah lady watched Beth perform the magic that makes the virtual candles flicker to life. "*Baruch Atah Adonoi, Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel shabbat*" appeared in the chatbox at the bottom of my screen. "Amen," typed the angel,

Five sets of **VIRTUAL CANDLES** were already ablaze, having been lit by avatars from earlier time zones.



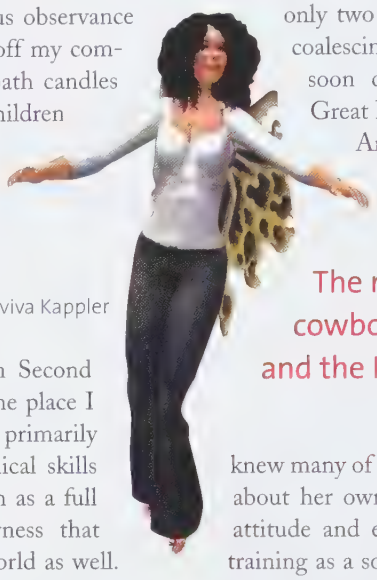
Beth Odets

"amen," typed the cowboy, "amen, amen, amen," added each avatar in turn. "Omein," typed Shmoo, the rabbit who types with a Yiddish accent. Jieux Shepherd passed out free bottles of "wearable mani" (miniature bottles of Manischewitz wine) that attached to

our hands when we clicked on them and animated our avatars to drink. (Jieux had bought the Manischewitz as well as its facility to enact guzzling.) We resembled an AA meeting that had tripped and fallen down all 12 steps as the last bars of "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav" faded from our computer speakers.

"*Shabbat shalom*!" "*Shalom haverim*," "*Gut Shabbos*," appeared in the dialogue box at the bottom of my screen as the members of SL Synagogue wished one another a peaceful Sabbath.

I sat at my computer in a suburb of Cleveland feeling warmed by the fellowship and quirky religious observance I'd just shared in a virtual world. I switched off my computer and went downstairs to light real Sabbath candles with my husband for the first time since our children had grown up and left home. Some months later, speaking with Beth, I learned that 75 SL Synagogue members had told her they started lighting real-life Sabbath candles after lighting them in Second Life.



Aviva Kappler

There are many places to visit in Second Life, but SL Synagogue remains the place I feel most welcome. At first I was primarily a voyeur—I didn't have the technical skills or experience necessary to function as a full participant—and the natural shyness that inhibits me in real life followed me to this world as well. On the holiday of Sukkos, I wandered in and out of the sukkahs being erected in the courtyard outside the synagogue and was charmed by their eclectic mix of traditional fruits, *lulavs* and *etrogs* [ritual fronds of myrtle, willow and palm, and citrons], fanciful art, meditation cushions, and tables suspended in mid-air. (Why? because people in Second Life aren't bound by real-life constraints such as tradition or gravity.)

The courtyard hummed with activity as avatars worked on their various projects, chatting, asking each other for help, and running in and out of one another's sukkahs to admire and advise. Something genuinely Jewish and communal was happening here. My definition of "real" began to shift and to stretch. I started to think, maybe it does depend on what your definition of "is" is.

Central to all this activity was the omnipresent Beth Odets (her avatar's name), clearly the queen bee of this bustling hive. An early resident of Second Life, the real-life Beth Brown first arrived as an artist curious about working in three dimensions. She bought the virtual landmass on which the synagogue was built in June 2005, and dubbed it TMA for "Tragically Misunderstood Artist." She spent the next year playing, learning, and networking in Second Life without any particular agenda—certainly not a Jewish one. Then in August 2006 she created a synagogue just because she wanted to show some non-Jewish friends what a synagogue felt like.

Second Life Synagogue was created from Beth's memory of all the synagogues she'd ever known. She lined the walls with large mosaic murals, made rows of pews facing a raised bimah, and left out the gender-segregated seating that would mark it as an Orthodox house of worship. A *ner tamid*, or eternal light, burns above the ark and two giant candelabras with crayon-colored candles stand to either side. The wall behind the ark appears to be made from iridescent glass that permits a muted view of trees swaying in the courtyard.

Beth listed the synagogue as a Second Life location, advertising its existence to all SL residents. (In other words, if a person went into "search" and typed the word "Jewish" or "synagogue," a photo of the new synagogue would appear along with an offer to teleport the resident to its location.) Without realizing it, she'd created the first Jewish content in Second Life. It took only two days for a nascent Jewish community to begin coalescing around the new structure. Curious avatars, soon dubbed "Javatars," began wandering in from Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, Israel, Germany, Argentina, Spain, and every time zone in the US. Beth welcomed the newcomers, showed them around, answered questions, and soon knew many of their real-life names and stories. Beth's openness about her own real life, combined with her non-judgmental attitude and excellent listening skills honed by her real-life training as a social worker, invites people to share information with her that is usually kept secret in Second Life.

The room grew silent as the angel, the cowboy, the rabbit, the **DISCO QUEENS** and the Hadassah lady bentched licht.

I interviewed some of SL Synagogue's 1,123 current members for this article and found out a little about their real lives.

There's Chaim Teichman (in Second Life, we only use avatar names) who grew up knowing he was Jewish, but with no understanding of what that meant. Fifteen members of Chaim's family were lost in the Holocaust, leaving deep scars on the family psyche. Chaim's father moved his family to a small town in upstate New York with no viable Jewish institutions and threatened to disown his children if they ever became religious. Chaim, a college student, snuck into SL Synagogue behind his father's back, more furtively than if he'd been perusing porn sites.

Namav Abramovitz is a little older, in his mid-twenties. He's been wheelchair-bound and hooked to a respirator for the past 10 years, a victim of mitochondrial myopathy. He attended university where he earned a B.A. in creative writing, but he's home now, in Mobile, Alabama, and isolated from other young adults. Although Namav spends his days productively at his computer working as an advocate for people with disabilities, he longs for friends who share his background and interests. His family belongs to a local synagogue, but Namav's disabilities make it difficult for him to attend services or other programs.

GruvenReuven Greenberg is a middle-aged Hasidic Jew who lives in a small town in Pennsylvania. He came to Second Life out of curiosity, just to look around. A computer techie and old Grateful Dead fan, Gruven had the skills and imagination to see the educational opportunities in Second Life. He got permission from Beth (that's how SL works—she owns the shul) to build a replica of the Kotel [Western Wall] beside the synagogue with

links to the weekly Torah *parsha* [synagogue reading], the daily *Daf-Yomi* [Talmud portion], and the medieval commentaries of Rashi. Gruven set up a *tzedakah* [charity] box that collects donated lindens for Kolel Chabad Charities, and he established SL Synagogue's Yeshiva Modim to study religious texts.

It soon became evident that Beth's virtual synagogue was filling real needs for Jewish education and fellowship. From the beginning, members were liberal and Orthodox, secular and religious, political and artistic. Beth explains that she "had to proceed very carefully to make sure that I didn't do anything disrespectful. For example, we don't do any actual services, so there's no inter-denominational tension. Yeshiva boys will come to my bluegrass concerts if I do them on Saturday night, and there's always a crazy mix of people who would never meet in real life sitting around Jieux Shepherd's Mitzvah Bar getting virtually wasted together." (That's an outdoor bar, on the synagogue's grounds, that belongs to Jieux—who's from New Orleans—where patrons can hang out and buy liquor.)

Within a short time the synagogue grew into a Jewish neighborhood that embraced GruvenReuben's Kotel, an art gallery, a live-music venue (that sometimes has music with some Jewish content), a meditation circle, Yeshiva Modim, Jieux Shepherd's Mitzvah Bar, the headquarters for *2Life*—the magazine for Javatars—and a Jewish store that sells virtual color-changing yarmulkes, mezuzot, prayer shawls, tzitzit, Shabbos candles, and Magen David necklaces.

Soon there were menorah lightings at Chanukah, a virtual Passover Seder—complete with traditional hunt for the afikomen [ritually broken piece of matzah]—and a wild party at Purim that included a ride on a virtual roller coaster. The community remembered Kristallnacht with a moving exhibit of real photographs by *2Life* editor Kafka Shnabel which gave testimony to lost Jewish communities in small towns near Kafka's real-life childhood home in Germany.

Jewish content began to appear in other areas of Second Life, too, particularly sites related to Israel. In 2007, Chaim Landau (his real name), a Legacy Heritage Fellow at the European Union of Jewish Students—known as Hagibor Shepherd in Second Life (no relation to Jieux)—asked Beth, based on her success in TMA, to work with him to create SL Israel. SL Israel opened that December and was an immediate success. Javatars and other well-wishers celebrated Israel's 60th birthday on the new virtual land that highlighted the country's historic, cultural, and technological achievements.

With wearable **MANISCHEWITZ** bottles attached to our virtual hands, we resembled an AA meeting that had tripped and fallen down all 12 steps as the last bars of "*Yerushalaim shel Zahav*" faded from our computer speakers.

Keykey Underwood

Beth became a Second Life celebrity, interviewed in real life for online editions of the Jerusalem Post, Washingtonpost.com, USA Today, The Forward, and News21, among others. She was interviewed by the BBC and NPR's "Talk of the Nation," and she has been featured, at one time or another, in most of the publications and TV shows produced in Second Life. In real life, Beth Brown is a 36-year-old divorcee with two young children who lives in Dallas where she's not only a social worker, but an artist and musician.

Beth spends so much time in Second Life that her real-life family frequently drops by to visit with her there. I've chatted with her mom during a Fish Fry Bingo concert, met Beth's daughter riding a virtual pony around the neighborhood, and found Beth's father, an Israeli-born Texan, wandering around TMA calling out, "Beth! Beth!," trying to deliver a real-life phone message.

No one compensates Beth financially for the innumerable hours she spends creating social and educational programming for strangers, and she foots the bill for the monthly tier of $195 out of her own pocket—well, plus the tips we drop into her virtual violin case at her bluegrass concerts.

In case you haven't fully figured this out, things can get a little loopy beyond the borders of real life. For example, it is not uncommon for two avatars to marry and set up housekeeping together. Cleansweep Broom and Tam Hyun were married by Reb Moshe Zepedski under a virtual *huppah*, because neither could imagine a wedding without a traditional Jewish ceremony. Tam circled the groom seven times, the couple shared a cup of wine, and a ring was presented to the bride.

"Is it on?"

"Yes, I'm wearing it."

"It's hard to see."

"You're facing the wrong way."

Reb Moshe blessed the couple in English and Hebrew as he explained each step of the service to the 32 guests gathered to witness the occasion, and then, of course, there was a joyful celebration with much drinking and dancing and platters of virtual food. An Internet radio station, Martini in the Morning, streamed music to the event with warm wishes to the newlyweds from the DJ, who played a love song in their honor.

The bride wore traditional white lace, while the groom was debonair in his black tuxedo and top hat. Most of the guests dressed in their finest for the occasion. Shmoo Snook, the rabbit, wore a tiny tuxedo with a bow tie that could change colors to match the color-changing flower in his lapel; a fairy brought her magic wand to bestow good wishes on the couple; and I came in a red gown with a flowing "flexi"-skirt that swished gracefully when I danced.

What does it mean to be married in Second Life? In their SL profiles, couples list their partners, and there is frequently a romantic snapshot of the two avatars locked in an embrace. They usually buy land and build virtual homes together. Many plight their troth—to persons they will never meet in real life—with great seriousness, and, as in real life, some marriages are more enduring than others.

A few avatars are married to one another in real life, though most are single or married to other people. I assume that a virtual marriage entitles the participants to virtual sex, which is easily accomplished with the assistance of animations. I don't know anything about the real-life Tam and Cleansweep, but, according to their profiles, their marriage has lasted for nearly a year and must have been consummated because they are now the parents of two boys, Menachem and Ephraim. Reb Moshe officiated at the Bris. Mazel tov. As I said, things get loopy.

During the time I've spent in Second Life, I've watched a very real community grow, morph, change its cast of characters, and mature. Lovely Jewish sites have been built, and, sadly, many of them have disappeared. But new sites appear, and will continue to do so.

And, as in real life, not all the experiences in this ephemeral world have been uplifting. We've had to deal with "griefers" (that's SL lingo) dressed in Nazi uniforms marching through our community and attempting to build a giant swastika in the sky above the shul. (One reports hate crimes or mischief to real-life Linden Labs who can ban trouble-makers from Second Life.) And SL Israel has been picketed by anti-Israel avatars.

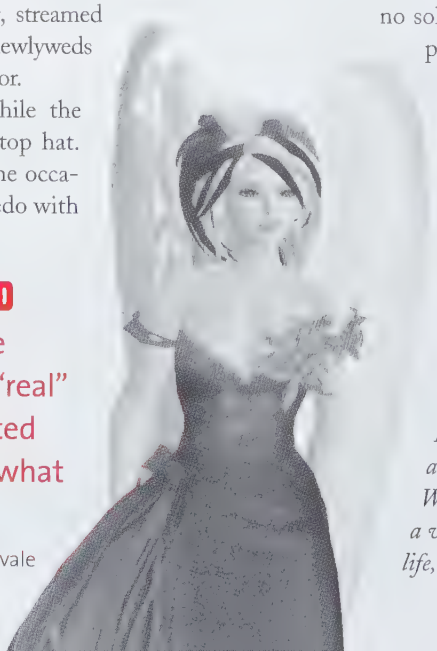
Beth takes these incidents as an opportunity to teach and build bridges and has tried to turn ugly situations into constructive dialogue. During a particularly heated confrontation over the Gaza Strip, Beth "rezzed" (SL slang for making something appear) a table in SL Israel and coaxed several of the picketers to sit down and talk. The talk wasn't particularly friendly and no solutions were found, but SL proved a safe place to speak and to be heard. I left the demonstration shaken by the confrontation and by the emotional stories from both sides.

I needed to calm down and organize my thoughts so I teleported over to SL Synagogue. It was late afternoon and no one else was there, my avatar took a seat facing the ark and prayed for peace as I watched virtual trees rustling in the virtual wind beyond the window. ■

Patricia Averbach, a freelance writer, served as executive director of The Chautauqua Writers' Center. Her SL avatar lives in Etopia, a village dedicated to sustainable living. In real life, Pat lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Something genuinely **JEWISH AND COMMUNAL** was happening as we built our sukkahs. My definition of "real" began to shift and to stretch. I started to think: Maybe it does depend on what your definition of "is" is.

Arella Springvale



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SIZE MATTERS

Notes on the Triumph of Feminist Art

by DANIEL BELASCO

Hannah Wilke, "Venus Pareve," 1982–84

THE JEWISH MUSEUM HAS FOCUSED ITS COLLECTION of contemporary art since the 1980s on works with strong themes of social consciousness: race, anti-Semitism, assimilation, identity, sexuality, and family. Within the collection, there is a strong grouping of well over 100 works that address critically the situation of women in Judaism and Jewish culture and history. Their creators occupy a veritable canon of American Jewish feminist art: Eleanor Antin, Martha Rosler, Hannah Wilke, Nancy Spero, Joyce Kozloff, Miriam Schapiro, Eva Hesse, Helène Aylon, Deborah Kass, Nan Goldin, Mierle Laderman Ukeles; the list goes on and on. And there are the notable Israelis Michal Heiman, Hila Lulu Lin, Sigalit Landau, Nurit David, Deganit Berest, among others. It's not surprising that such a large collection of feminist artworks would live at The Jewish Museum, since so many of the pioneers of feminist art, theory and activism in the U.S. and abroad have been Jewish.

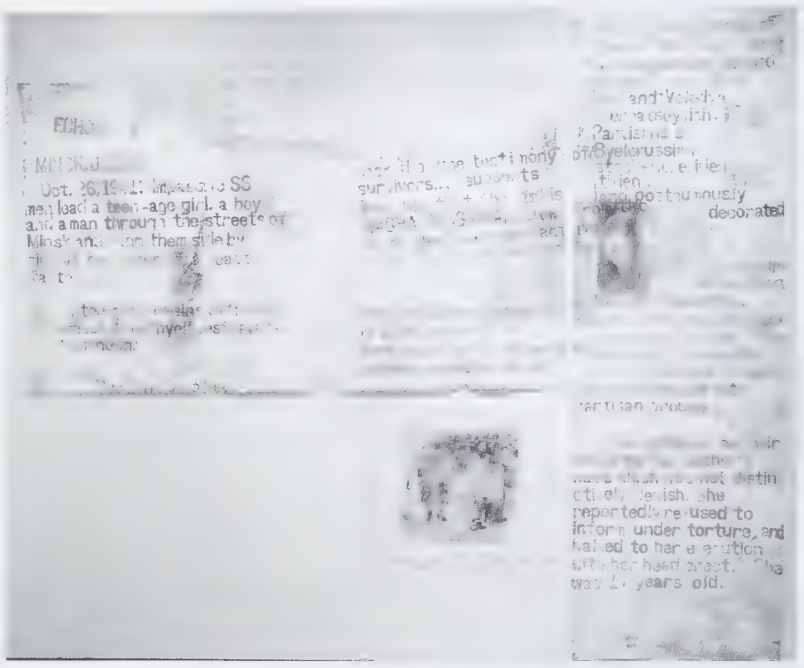
Though some of these treasures have been in its collection for decades, *Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism* is the first exhibition at The Jewish Museum to address directly the influence of feminism on visual art, and the influence of Jewish culture on both. The show consists of 33 works, 23 of which are in the

Dana Schutz, "Devourer," 2004

collection of The Jewish Museum, seven of them acquired in the last three years. What was behind the choices for the exhibition?

First, I selected pieces with maximum visual impact, including large-scale pieces. Size matters. It is important to show the ambition and passion of the artists in the size of their works, and the forcefulness by which they act upon the viewer. I wanted an abstract Judy Chicago painting (see p. 29) that, at eight feet square, would knock people's socks off, even as the blurred grid rendered with glossy sprays of acrylic paint suggests introspection. The show's large works by Ida Applebroog, Miriam Schapiro, Nancy Spero, Melissa Meyer, Deborah Kass, and Rosalyn Drexler show feminist art as a muscular, assertive visual aesthetic, even when the media include textiles and collage.

Most of the works in *Shifting the Gaze* are not easily digestible. Many are either fully abstract, or take familiar symbols and materials and subject them to an aesthetic process that moves them several degrees away from their familiar settings in daily life or consciousness. The works may be more familiar because they are paintings, and painting is the conventional medium of Art. But the overall effect is to transmit visual, non-verbal information to the viewer. The works in this show play on our emotions. They make our hearts race, or slow them down. Make our eyes dilate, or our blood boil. Or maybe send us running out the door. More often than not, the works are attacking or critiquing art itself. And there has been a great body of thought that the true feminist revolution must entail the invention, proliferation, and mainstreaming of entirely new feminist aesthetic forms and social structures. This includes the elevations of "women's art" (needlework, collage, ceramics) to equal status with painting and sculpture, the development of groups and institutions to support professionalization, historical research to inspire new woman-centered genealogies of art, and the dismantling of the so-called "male gaze" that rendered woman as sexual object, not thinking subject.



Nancy Spero, "Masha Bruskina," 1995

the success of the feminist interventions into art since the 1960s. The show is, in my mind, an expression of the triumph of feminist art. Over the decades it has successfully brought the revolution home, effecting its transformation not only in the realm of new media and performance art, but in the very center of Western art: oil painting.

Now that we are in the post-postmodernist moment which has seen a revival of interest in painting and abstraction, we can see that in fact it was feminism that breathed life back into painting when it was declared dead in the 1970s. Indeed, there is an inherent tension in feminism between the need to establish strong women-centered institutions, and the need for women to go forth and reform the man-centered institutions. Like the feminist revolution in Judaism itself, this exhibition attempts to acknowledge both trajectories, showcasing artists who have built strong women-centered practices and also point out the way that

In fact it was feminism that breathed life back into painting when it was declared dead in the 1970s.

For feminist artists to pick up the brush and confront the empty canvas—especially in the 1970s, when painting was declared dead by most of the leading (male) critics and artists, rejecting it as bourgeois and commodified—was itself a great act of violation, of going against the grain and maintaining the personal struggle to create meaning with the stubborn method of applying paint to canvas. As one artist told me, in painting, nothing is hidden, everything is revealed, and the medium is entirely unforgiving. I find this a heroic act, the simple decision to make meaning out of blankness. *Shifting the Gaze*, by highlighting painting, especially large-scale painting, aims to affirm feminist aesthetics have affected the artistic mainstream.

It was essential to include men in the show. Men had a personal stake in the rejection of the macho myth and masculine aggression. *Shifting the Gaze* is not the first feminist-oriented exhibition to include men, but it certainly is the first in a Jewish context, especially important because of the feminist tendency to assail the patriarchal roots and liturgy of Judaism and the traditional Jewish social structure.

Painters Leon Golub, Robert Kushner, and Cary Leibowitz are not feminists per se: they did not join any groups, or sub-

scribe to any theories. They were fellow-travelers in the struggle against militarism and patriarchy. And they found feminism to be a fertile, vital source of ideas and new forms they could adapt to their own ends to continue their own struggles against stereotypical masculinity. I felt that for an exhibition to argue about the "triumph" of feminism in art, to only present works by women would undermine the point by showing its effect on half the art world. But to include men, even just three, shows the wider influence of feminist ideas, and their effect on the work of the other half as well.

Feminism and the lens of gender have for me been the most tempting, and effective, intellectual means to evaluate the relative merit and value of cultural production. Feminism's ethical standards, risk taking, and utopian visions all hold great appeal to me, and, feminists are my personal heroes. My moral compass is set with feminism as true north, guiding me through my academic work as an art historian and my personal life as a man, as a husband, as a father. I know I'm not the only man who feels this way, and I'm pleased that including men in the show helps confirm feminism's wider impact.

Lee Lozano, "Untitled," c. 1962

Now about the Jewish aspects of this show. Part of the Jewishness is geographic and social. This is admittedly, a New York-centric show. Though California was an important refuge for many East Coast women artists fleeing the machismo that had infected the New York art scene, nearly all eventually returned to New York by the late 1970s. Joyce Kozloff created a brilliant map in 1996, on which she wrote the names of all the Jewish women artists, writers, and leaders she could think of on the streets of an old New York map. Quite pointedly, the work becomes a picture of a community, both real and imagined, of Jewish women artists dominating the New York landscape. And indeed, looking back on certain feminist efforts, the Jewish participation runs high among the founders of important feminist art groups, from the Feminist Art Program in 1970 to the Heresies collective in 1975 to Women's Action Coalition in 1992 to Ridykeulous in 2006.

Nancy Spero, "Victims, Holocaust," 1968

Another context is The Jewish Museum itself. During its decidedly modernist phase in the 1960s, the museum exhibited work by numerous influential Jewish women artists, including Lee Krasner, Eva Hesse, and Louise Nevelson, sometimes before they became feminists, as in the case of Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. However, there was no theoretic structure to bring these artists together under the rubric of a Jewish feminist art.

The three realms—Jewish, feminist, and art—while coming together in pairs, gained momentum as a trio in the 1990s, and achieved a stunning degree of institutionalization in the past 10 years. In the last half decade, we have seen the establishment of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum [Lilith's cover story in Summer, 2007]. This hosts the newly restored exemplar of 1970s collaborative feminist art, Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–79). Around the same time, the art historians Lisa E. Bloom and Gail Levin published major scholarly articles and books, including Bloom's *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art*. They argue, as *Shifting the Gaze* does also, that Jewish feminist artists' very attitude and ethos—to heal the world using language and the reinvention of form and daily life—is inherent to postmodern Jewish culture. In art, the bifocal lens of "Jewish" and "feminist" foregrounds memory, ethics, and the politics of representation. Perhaps the very essence of the Jewish feminist project is to exert a form of tough love to push toward integration, wholeness, and a unity of self, subject, and society.

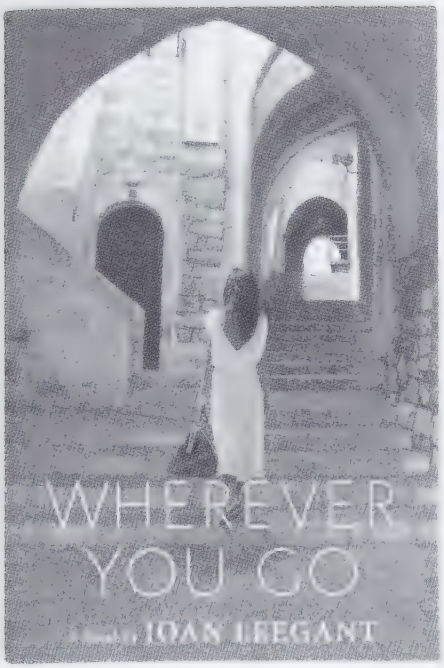
Daniel Belasco is Henry J. Leir Associate Curator at The Jewish Museum in New York. His writing has appeared previously in Lilith.

Lee Krasner, "Self Portrait," c. 1930

Miriam Schapiro, "Fanfare," 1958

"The works in this show play on our emotions.
They make our hearts race, or slow them down.
Make our eyes dilate, or our blood boil.
Or maybe send us running out the door."

Judy Chicago, "Sky Flesh," 1971



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VILNA VEGETARIANISM, 1938

Turns out that vegetarian cooking—and eating—is nothing new to Jews.

by FRANCES BRENT & JUDITH HAUSMAN

IN 1938, FANIA LEWANDO, THE OWNER of a famous restaurant in Vilna, published her recipes in a Yiddish vegetarian cookbook, *Vegetarish-dietisher kokh-bukh, 400 shpayzn gemakht oysshislekh fun grinsn* (Vegetarian-Dietetic Cookbook: 400 Meals Made Exclusively from Vegetables). Lewando's Restaurant, at 14 Niemiecka Street, was a place to bring visiting dignitaries, as well as a favorite of Jewish artists and writers at the forefront of Poland's avant-garde. Her restaurant, cookbook, and thoughts about nutrition reflected the new secular and modern Jewish culture built on the old.

A fragile and humble artifact from a thriving Jewish city at its height (which was also the brink of its destruction), a rare copy of Fania Lewando's vegetarian cookbook is now housed in the YIVO collection in New York. It tells us about Vilna's role in the intellectual trends of the time, but it also memorializes Vilna's humble, daily life, where the idiom of the kitchen—"Small potatoes," "It would blacken my face like a burnt kasha," "Sticking their heads in other people's pots"—added expressiveness to the modern Yiddish literary arts.

Although she was a restaurateur, Lewando based her recipes on kitchen literacy that every home cook would have had. Her introduction gives advice on the importance of women learning to cook and explains the philosophy of vegetarianism, the benefits of fruits and vegetables, and the functions of vitamins (including protection against scurvy and rickets). At the same time, her recipes assume skills and familiarity with market produce—Antonowka apples and "your finest bee's honey," and basic use of kitchen equipment—grinders, flasks, and clay pots. There is a dedicated Passover section, one on confections, on preserves and on pickles, as we would expect. There are no strident politics or tracts, unlike other cookbooks of the time coming from countries that were part of the International Vegetarian Union, which began in Dresden in 1908.

Fania Lewando's cookbook demonstrates how Vilna was linked to the enlarging world.

The bulk of Lewando's meals sound familiar today, instantly identifiable with Ashkenazi cuisine: noodle and potato kugels, carrot tzimmes, bean cholent with eggs cooked inside, klopps [a kind of meatloaf] and sweet or savory-filled pierogi. Yes, there are entries that use chocolate, lemons and dried figs—luxuries then—but also thrifty recipes that acknowledge the poverty and strain of 1938 Vilna: fermenting stale browned rolls backwards into beer-like cider; candying precious delicacies such as orange rinds; turning easy-to-grow radishes into jam.

Dairy products enrich many dishes, and we see that vegetarianism is a solution not only to health but also to keeping kosher. As Alter Kacyzne—Yiddish songwriter, photographer, editor, playwright, and screenwriter—wrote in the restaurant's guestbook: "An appeal to all Semites and Aryans from a person who's been a vegetarian for thirty years. Gentlemen, you should know, a lunch at Lewando's is the best propaganda for the dairy idea."

A publicity brochure from 1938 mentions that Lewando lectured on the S.S. Batory "which runs between the port of Gdynia and the U.S., and she installed a vegetarian kitchen on the ship...." But we don't know how much science or training she might have had. The prominence of the publisher of her of her book, G. Kleckina, her pleasing portrait and the impressive guest list which included Marc Chagall and Itzik Manger suggest her important position in Vilna and the hospitable center of the arts that her restaurant was.

Lewando's cookbook demonstrates how Vilna was linked to the enlarging world. Appended testimonials show that actors, painters and doctors from New York, Bucharest and Warsaw all sought out this restaurant for mock kishka filled with bread crumbs and mushrooms; mock caviar and "veal" cutlets made of legumes, grains and nuts; and seasonal "health" juices. Even the beautiful illustrations of vegetables that decorate the opening pages of the book, captioned in English and Hebrew and perhaps modeled on pictures from seed packets sold in Europe and Palestine at the time, signal international networks and awareness, and perhaps encourage the independence of growing one's own food. ■

Food writer Judith Hausman is the co-author of Over the Rainbeau: Living the Dream of Sustainable Farming.
Frances Brent is the author of The Lost Cellos of Lev Aronson.

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deep in the valley

fiction by CHERISE WOLAS

It is Wednesday night and she drives to a motel deep in the valley. She has never been deep in the valley. The deep valley is far away. She loves the way *deep in the valley* sounds and she loves the thoughts she thinks about it. She thinks of the envelopes taped to the headboard of her single bed. She has slept in that single bed forever, since she was a child. There have been many other beds over the years, single beds in white rooms with black barred windows, common rooms where she sat with people who rubbed tabletops, watched games played, rules chucked aside, listened to piano keys plunked by cross-eyed women.

It is hot in October. It is humid in Los Angeles. It is not a regular night. It is the start of the Jewish New Year. It is the first night leading the Jews, she, and her mother and father, into days of repentance, collective guilt, and interior monologues.

Will you come to temple with Daddy and me tomorrow?

Maybe tomorrow I'll come with you and Daddy. But don't worry tonight. I'll be out late.

Her mother nods. Her father walks in. Her mother says, *She's not coming tonight. She'll be out late, but we aren't to worry. Right, honey? And she'll probably come with us tomorrow morning for services.*

Her mother and father are used to her late nights, her disappearances, her living at home in her childhood bedroom. She thinks it is strangely nice that the three of them had lived together for so many years.

They walk from her parents' bedroom down the stairs. She stops halfway and says, *Maybe I'll come tomorrow. Probably you can count on it.*

At the bottom of the stairs her mother calls up.

You could wear that new dress we bought. You look so pretty in purple.

From below, her parents wave goodbye. From above she waves back. Her father opens the front door. The sun is still in the sky. The trees in the front yard frame her parents at the threshold. They look back at her. She floats on the stairs; her face scrubbed clean like her father prefers. Her hair, long and wavy, is still wet from the shower.

She stopped drying her hair in the first mirage. Over the years she has lived in rooms without locks along hallways that were always locked and required keys to enter and exit. She cannot remember those places, or her rooms in those places. Cords, electricity, shoelaces, belts, hairpins, razors, studded earrings, none of that was ever allowed in any of the mirages.

"PARKERSBURGH, WV." NINA T. BECKER. ©2009. WWW.BECKERPROJECTS.COM.

Her mother blows up a kiss.

I'm so glad we'll all be together tomorrow.

She blows back the kiss. Her delicate hands send her mother down the walk to her father. She sends her mother to pray. Her mother leaves believing they will all pray together in temple tomorrow leaning against flattened burgundy nap in seats that sort of rock, listening to the shofar blow while she twists her mother's wedding ring round and round and round on her mother's finger until, like always, her father takes her busy hand and smoothes it, quiets it, laces his fingers in between hers, crooks her arm up into his elbow, and smiles down at her.

When the front door closes she walks up the stairs.

Her hair is dry now and she is in the car. Her bag is in the backseat, the contents winnowed. She has chosen her dead dog's favorite ball that she has kept for years, the latest issue of a fashion magazine, a pill bottle, and an undershirt she found in her father's drawer years back. She has worn it to a white softness finer than silk. There is a frayed hole at the collar. The hole makes her feel safe.

She stops at the red light at the bottom of the hill on the street that leads deep into the valley. She feels good. In the next car an older man smiles at her through his window, his hair rising and falling in the air conditioning. He smiles over like he is a Jew too and also avoiding temple. She smiles back and turns up the music. At the green light she presses hard on the gas and her hair whips behind her in the heat. It is still steamy though the sun is long gone.

She thinks of all the clicks and snaps and locks behind her. She can still hear them. But tonight there were only three: the solid click of the front door; the softer snap of her bedroom door, lockless for years; the back door lock when she left.

She thinks of her mother and father in temple, prayer books open. She sees them listening to the sermon. She sees them listening to appeals for contributions. She sees them listening to the schedule for morning services and the temple activities for the days of awe and atonement from Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur comes to a close.

She thinks of those who will be inscribed for the coming year in the Book of Life. *Who shall live and who shall die* and she thinks about that songed incantation, that musical recitation of all the different ways people will die during the coming year. She thinks about those whose time has come. She thinks about those who will not be inscribed in the Book of Life.

She rents the motel room for a few days and pays with her new credit card. She was given the card after she avoided another mirage for a year. When her parents gave it to her they said they were proud she was handling the pressure. She agreed. She had been handling the pressure well. The clerk at the desk, a boy, is nice enough. He smiles but does not make dumb polite chatter. He does not ask to see her driver's license. She is used to showing her license because she looks young. She knows she looks older than a teenager but not quite a woman. She knows she looks perpetually suspended: otherworldly and not quite grown. She is thirty-three. This year her birthday falls during the Days of Awe, on the day Yom Kippur comes to a close. She signs the receipt in her tiny handwriting. The clerk's silence seems right to her. She is near now. Probably no one ought to talk to her.

The room is sort of okay, beiges and pinks, with a flat, king-sized bed. It is a motel but the mini-bar is stocked. On top of the mini-bar is a binder filled with information about tourist attractions. The Bible is in one nightstand on sticky floral contact paper and a local phone book is in the other. Neither is quite the Book of Life she thinks and unpacks her bag.

The Bible is in one nightstand and a local phone book is in the other. Neither is quite The Book of Life, she thinks, and unpacks her bag.

She walks down the hall to fill the plastic ice bucket. The hallway is quiet. There is only the hum of the ice machine. The halls are not quite fresh, but she has lived in much worse. She has lived in places she tries to forget. She turns her head when memories of those mirages squiggle her brain.

She fills the ice bucket. She hangs the *Do Not Disturb* sign outside the door. The door clicks and she snaps the lock. She peels the plastic from the tall glass in the bathroom. She fills the glass from the tap. In the bedroom she strips naked and avoids the mirror. She pulls on her father's undershirt and sits cross-legged on the bed. The bedspread crackles. Squeezing her dog's ball, she slowly flips through the fashion magazine.

She knows what she hopes. She knows she floated her mother false hope. She feels badly about that false hope. But her final false hope is not as bad as other things she has put her mother and father through. She never wanted her mother and father to suffer. She just cannot do anything about anything when it all comes upon her. When it all comes upon her she wants to whirl and whirl. The faster she can whirl, the faster she will float, out there, up there, float to a place where it really does feel good, to a place where it is warm, buttery warm, and she is calm. That is where she wants to be. She wants to be in the warmth and calm. She wants to be cocooned and at peace. She is on the last page of the last chapter of last year's book. This year she does not want to be inscribed. This year she will not be inscribed. This year it will be done. This year is done. This year she is done. She knows that.

She knows where she is going. There is nowhere else to go. There is nothing else to try. There are no other beliefs to believe. She no longer imagines she possesses something everyone else seems to have. The box is too little now. The box she is in is too little. She has become clear in her thinking. She knows that the little box she is in will never expand. The little box has no doors. The little box has no windows. The little box only has walls that keep pressing in. The walls keep pressing in toward the center. She is standing in the center of the little box. She knows the walls of the little box will keep pressing in until the little box is a tiny white square, small and perfectly folded, perfectly folded like one of her father's handkerchiefs, like the handkerchiefs stacked in her father's top drawer, and she will be inside that little box, perfectly folded like a tiny handkerchief, and no one will be able to unfold her ever again.

She reads an article in the magazine about applying mascara in a new way. At the mirror she tries the new technique the article says will make her look like a star. She brushes mascara onto her lashes. She follows the directions in the article but her eyelashes look the same as always. New techniques are always overrated she thinks.

She turns on the radio and finds a clear station. The station plays music without interruption. It is pretty music without words. Pretty music without words seems right to her too. She is near now. Probably she ought not hear the words of others.

She folds down the bedspread. She has drunk the water and fills the glass up with ice cubes. The ice cubes are cubed, perfectly cubed. The cubes are clear. The cubes are perfectly clear, not cloudy at all. She loves the tinkling pinging sound the ice cubes make when they hit each other and ping against the sides of the glass. She refills the glass from the tap.

Over the years she has lived in rooms without locks, along hallways that were always locked and required keys to enter and exit.

The curtains are drawn and she pulls them open. The view is not great, and there is no moon, but looking at the dark sky is much better than looking at the faded cabbage roses on the curtains. On the bed she plumps the pillows behind her. She unscrews the bottle and pours into her palm all of the pills. She has hoarded all of the pills for a long time. She has hoarded the pills from her last visits to mirages, mirages with green bars and many guards. She hoarded the pills between visits and then for a year. She swallows the pills. She has learned that pills go down quicker if she snaps her fingers. Her fingers snap to the beat of the music. She takes a long drink of water. She clicks off the light. Through the open curtains the white light from distant constellations floats into the motel room. The white light is faint but makes the motel room look star dusted and almost romantic. Her mother and father will not be home from temple yet. It will be an hour before services end and everyone has kissed everyone they know and wished strangers *a happy, yes and to you, a healthy new year, may we all be blessed. May we all be blessed* she can hear the strangers say while shaking hands awkwardly with those ahead and behind. She wonders when her mother and father will find the envelopes. She wonders which of them will pull the envelopes off her headboard and ball up the tape she used into a sticky nothing and throw the sticky nothing away.

She selected her words carefully. She wrote the letter several times. She wanted loving words. She wanted firm words. She wanted her words to tell her mother and father those other times they found her perhaps she had not taken the necessary steps to see it through; to see herself through it, though she thought she had. She wanted her words to tell her mother and father that maybe those times she had not been sure, or not as sure, but she had seemed sure on the inside where it counts. The words she selected about this time leave no doubt. She has no doubts. She selected words to tell her mother and father they cannot save her. She does not need their saving. She is saving herself. She selected words to tell them their repentance is not necessary, their atonement not required; they are absolved of their misplaced guilt. Her words tell them there is no belief called *just if*. Her words tell them she is freeing them, *just if* they will be freed.

She knows her mother and father will give the concert tickets to her boyfriend, a birthday present she bought with money earned at the pet store. Her boyfriend will not be prepared. She never told him a lot about herself. She just danced in and out of the light.

She hopes her mother and father have had enough time. She hopes they have prepared over the years. They should have prepared. They should have prepared for her, for the fact of her, for the fact of her core, of what is there, and what is not. Everyone sees her broken wings. Since she was young she knew she was different. She saw her difference. Everyone saw her difference. She saw her broken wings. Since she was young she knew she was a creature created differently. She knows she was created differently from everyone around her.

She hopes her mother understands the floated false hope and forgives her pretending that mother and father, and daughter, would pray together tomorrow. She hopes her father has the strength. She hopes that if her father does not have the strength, that he will find the strength. She hopes her mother and father find peace. She hopes finally they will be at peace. She hopes with that peace her mother and father will remember what it feels like to be fearless and brave. She has loathed herself for the fear she has made them feel. She just never had any choice. Now she is fearless and brave. Bravely she lies down deep in the valley. ■

Cherise Wolas is a writer, film producer, lawyer, and co-president of Ovie Entertainment. She's now working on a book of interconnected short stories and a novel.

TO BRIS OR NOT TO BRIS

That is the question in our postmodern era.

by RANDI GLATZER

We're hosting a swim party for four-year-olds in our backyard. At the sight of the giant wading pool, the young guests holler with glee and strip off their clothes. While the adults laugh at the profusion of squealing kids with bare butts galumphing through my kitchen, I'm stealing glances at the boys' penises. I can't help myself. It's a habit I've acquired since my son was born. I'm checking to see which boys are circumcised, and which aren't.

I'm not surprised when I see that all the tiny penises in my kitchen—even one Jewish kid's—are covered in their original, droopy sheaths. In this crowd—my semi-bohemian, overeducated urban crowd—almost no one circumcises anymore. I gave birth to my second child, a son, Louis, a couple of years ago. As a practicing Jew, I never even considered not circumcising him. And now I wonder: Did I make the right decision?

"You sure you want a *bris*?" my husband Mitch asked me a couple of months before Louis was born.

"Yes, I do. Absolutely."

"Why don't we just do it in the hospital?" Mitch asked.

"That would be a circumcision, but it wouldn't be a bris," I argued. "There's no medical reason to circumcise," I told Mitch. "So if we're going to do it for religious reasons—which is the only reason to do it—then we should just be straight about it. We

Is it time for ritual circumcision to go the way of animal sacrifice?

should have a formal ceremony, and on the eighth day." I even had a *mohel* [ritual circumciser] lined up. Dr. Tapper also happened to be our pediatrician. So I knew our boy would be in good hands.

Mitch shook his head. "It's a barbaric custom," he said. "It's totally tribal."

"I know," I said. "I still want to do it."

Both Mitch and I were born Jewish. Mitch was raised in an observant Jewish household, and was forced to go to synagogue and keep kosher long after he realized he'd rather be playing baseball and eating cheeseburgers on Saturday mornings. His father died when he was only eight, and his mother and sister used Jewish rules to keep him in line. In the process, they sucked a lot of the fun out of what remained of his childhood.

I, on the other hand, hungered for Jewish tradition for as long as I could remember. I was raised in a secular, atheistic household. My first year in college, I showed up for the High Holy Days services held on campus. I decided I was old enough to pray if I wanted to, even if my parents never had. But it wasn't that simple. As I stood in the lecture hall, flanked on each side by rows of dark-haired, earnest students chanting and singing, turning the pages of their prayer books in unison, I realized I didn't know a single word. I flipped through the book, trying to figure out what page everyone was on, feeling lost in more ways than one.

It took years of reading, taking classes, and inner wrestling to figure out where I belonged in the Jewish world. At 33, I finally learned to read Hebrew and recite all of the Saturday morning synagogue service. To honor my achievement, the rabbi at the "learner's minyan" I attended held a naming ceremony for me. It felt wonderful.

I didn't want my children to feel anchorless, as I had. I wanted them to own their blood, own their tradition, and not have to struggle to claim it. But was I going overboard with the bris?

I called Dr. Tapper. A tall, kindly, gray-haired man with Marcus Welby gravitas, he's modern enough to quote statistics from recent Harvard nutrition studies, but there's something solid and timeless about him, too. He wears a white coat and—much to my amazement—carries a little black bag. "So tell me again," I said, "why you think a bris is so important."

I didn't want my child to feel anchorless, as I had. I wanted him to own his blood, own his own tradition, and not have to struggle to claim it.

Dr. Tapper offered a parable about how a man arrives on the shore of a new country, holding some suitcases that members of his family had been carrying for 3,000 years. "Maybe he wants to forget about those suitcases so he doesn't have to lug them around anymore," the doctor said. "But does he just throw them in the ocean? Maybe, just maybe, there's something valuable in those suitcases. It's not right for him to throw them away."

Three weeks before my due date, I was still plotting how to convince Mitchell to agree to the bris, and not let us be the first generation of Jews to dump 3,000 years of custom, when my water broke. "Can I please schedule the bris now?" I asked Mitch in the hospital a few hours later, as Louis lay on my chest. I was overwhelmed with tenderness for our new son. I no longer had strategy or fight in me to change my husband's mind. All I had was my teary desire.

"Okay, schedule it," Mitch said. Maybe Mitch felt my yearning for Jewish ritual trumped his resentment of it. Maybe with a son actually in his arms, the history cried out to him, too. I phoned Dr. Tapper, and told him we were on.

I love hosting traditional events. I spread the white tablecloth on my dining room table, set out Manischewitz wine, plus platters of bagels and cream cheese and whitefish salad, and candles and matches for the blessings. The house filled quickly with family and friends. I took coats and gave hugs and showed off the new baby and generally gushed with joy.

But the white plastic board Dr. Tapper held under his arm when he showed up didn't seem nearly so quaint as his little black-leather medical bag. "Oh my God," I thought, as he laid it on the table. It was rectangular, the size of a dish-draining rack, and perhaps an inch and a half thick. The slab had been molded with a single well, an indentation, in the shape of baby: a place for the newborn boy to lie. Then there were black mesh straps, and buckles, so the baby could be restrained. Why did the kids have to be strapped down? Did the baby boys flail, and fight? They were so small and immobile at eight days; was the pain so bad that they jerked out of reflex? Though clearly scrubbed clean, the plastic board had rust stains and wear. I felt ill; I turned away as Dr. Tapper arrayed knives and clippers from his black bag on the white tablecloth.

My sick feeling passed as the ritual went on, and Dr. Tapper passed us the blessings to read. Our friends joked and laughed. I nestled against Mitch, my four-year-old daughter Claire leaned against me, and we all beamed in the glow of the candle I lit. "There is a new light in our hearts and our home," Mitch and I recited together. "Fortunate are we as we celebrate the gift of life and hold eternity in our arms." Still, I had to sit on the couch with my back turned during the actual proceedings.

That wasn't the worst of it, though. The reckoning came late, late that night, as I sat up alone with the baby, in that dreamy 2:00 a.m. haze that all new mothers know. It is the time when a mother's shushing drowns out the mewls of a hungry newborn, when she fumbles to uncover her breast and the baby whimpers and cries and then finally digs his face into the softness of skin, latching on to the nipple. Louis made those happy "mmmm" sounds; I watched his cheeks hollow as he gulped down milk. I stroked his wispy black hair. And then, like a passing driver who gapes to see blood at the scene of an accident, I unpeeled his diaper.

The sight of his red, raw penis made me gasp. A whole piece of skin was gone. The sweet sack of a penis, just one more perfect part of his perfect little self, had been hacked away. He screamed when I touched him there, his face turning red as the skin at his crotch. What had I been thinking?

I left Louis swaddled on the bed, and pulled my copy of *The Baby Book* by Dr. William Sears off my shelf. What I read confirmed the worst of my guilt. Of course Dr. Sears, god of attachment parenting—the loosey-goosey lovey-dovey style of mothering that many of my friends and I embrace—made exceptions for religious reasons. But in general, he termed circumcision "genital mutilation." So this was it, I thought. I just subjected my son to a procedure no better than clitoridectomy in tribal Africa. I realized that I'd spent weeks blindly convincing my husband to go along with the ritual. I was so bent on calling him to my side that I never questioned my own stance. I held Louis to me protectively, feeling horrified and fraudulent. Here I was, trying to safeguard my new child, and the one he needed the most protection from was me.

A few days later, a friend helped me lower the volume on my inner melodrama. Eva, who's not Jewish, and didn't circumcise her son for all the reasons Dr. Sears gave, swore to me it was no big deal that I'd circumcised mine. "Jesus, Randi, it'll heal," she promised. And true to her words, the urgent redness under Louis's diaper gradually faded, until his penis looked as healthy and jubilant as it had when he was born—only different.

And what am I to make of this now? I've been researching. Louis will, in fact, be physically unlike many of his peers. Four decades ago, when I was born, at the height of the circumcision craze, well over 90 percent of American boys were circumcised at birth. Now the numbers have dropped below 60 percent. And while there is some recent medical evidence in favor of the procedure—a 2005 study suggests that circumcision can slow the spread of H.I.V.—the American Academy of Pediatrics maintains its viewpoint that circumcision isn't warranted for medical reasons. My guess is that the rate is far, far lower than 60 percent among today's hippies and hipsters; most Whole-Foods-shopping, sling-wearing mothers eschew the knife. There's even a movement, I learned, among liberal Jewish parents to hold a "*brit shalom*" instead of a "*brit milah*" on a boy's eighth day. This "covenant of peace" ceremony involves all the prayers and blessings, the candles and wine, to welcome a new boy into the fold. But there's no plastic tray, no restraints, no scalpel. I wish I'd known about that option before, wish I'd considered it.

But I'm split on the topic. Part of me wishes all the Jews of today would begin a serious examination of this issue, and leave behind circumcision the way our ancestors left behind animal sacrifice. But another part knows that even with more forethought, I would still have made the same decision. I've come to feel a bizarre sense of contentment when I view my son's nakedness, in those moments when he lays on the changing table and chortles at me as I unfold a fresh diaper. His flesh sacrifice, now more obvious in a world of uncircumcised peers, bolsters me. He is Jewish, and therefore I am Jewish; my acceptance of this primitive rite sweeps away, finally, any doubt. And I suppose that's what it's always done: define the tribesmen, and their mothers, too. ■

Randi Glatzer has written for Self, Philadelphia Magazine, Glamour, The Village Voice, Vibe, and other publications. She lives and writes in Philadelphia.

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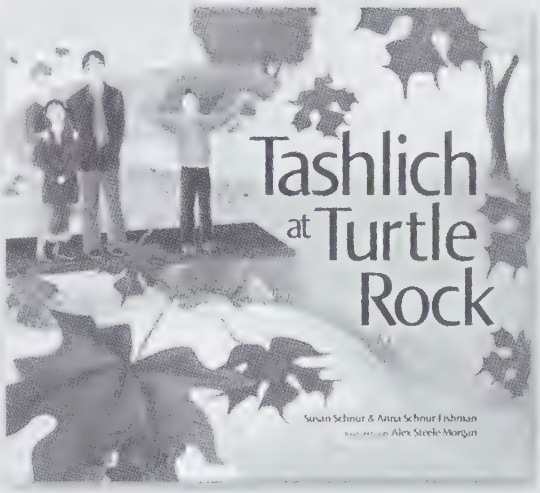

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REVIEWS

Exiting Time

Sabbath revolutionizes society

The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time, by **Judith Shulevitz** (Random House, $26), tells two stories that run parallel and then unexpectedly intersect. The first story is of Shulevitz herself, a religious skeptic raised in Puerto Rico, cultivating her adolescent rebellion against the Sabbath. The second is the historical narrative of the Sabbath as a social, chronological, governmental, domestic and religious institution. Both stories—one contemporary and personal, the other ancient and divine—are perpetually evolving. The Sabbath evolves for Puritans, Lutherans, Jews, feminists, college students, Marxists—and even for the working class, as it is a day when rest is mandated through strict rules.

Shulevitz' book mirrors her own quest for identity within the context of the Sabbath and outside of the labels that are used to define women: wife, mother, professional. She had thought the Sabbath to be impractical, a phenomenon belonging to past centuries where women had a single occupation: taking care of their children. Certainly the rules that provide a freedom from the bondage of time do not apply to the multitasking of second-wave feminism. She laments, "When my children were little, I rushed irritably through every diaper change, every walk, every meal. There seemed no other way to retain economic independence, professional viability, a feeling of competence, the faith that I would continue to exist once I stepped outside the house."

In struggling with her own Sabbath observance, Shulevitz discovers how choosing to follow rules empowers, while being forced to follow rules seems oppressive. Jewish law as traditionally interpreted forbids activities such as cooking, driving, writing, using electronic devices, and handling money. "The Sabbath seems designed to make life as inconvenient as possible… In a world of brightness and portability and instantaneous intimacy, the Sabbath foists on the consciousness the blackness of night, the heaviness of objects, the miles that keep us apart." And yet, according to the Kabbalists, the Sabbath is also the day that each of us is granted an additional soul, which Shulevitz imagines as a big, fleecy blanket.

Shulevitz believes the ritual of a weekly day of rest is critical and in danger of extinction. However, she writes in gentle terms, coaxing even the non-religious reader into a deep nostalgia for a simpler era, describing the Sabbath as "an aftertaste of infancy."

Take this book's title literally. This book—peppered with references to the Talmud, sociological and financial articles, and speeches from abolitionists—is a global depiction of the Sabbath, and the structures it creates in a many different religions and societies. It is this wide range of meanings that permits the formation of identity within the context of a lifestyle masked as ritual, a transformative power essential in a modern age.

SHIRA ENGEL

Checkmate!

A U.S. family and the Cold War

Something Red, by **Jennifer Gilmore** (Scribner, $25.00), provides a high-definition look at an era, a geographic location and a family. The novel is the story of the Goldstein family of Washington D.C., but it's also the story of a largely under-chronicled historical era of transition: that period of ambiguity during the late 1970s and early 1980s in which the United States and Russia were locked in a fruitless standoff of paralysis and mistrust. Through narrative, Gilmore forges an allegory of a country and a family locked in a state of checkmate.

Everyone in the Goldstein family is in transition. Sharon Goldstein, family matriarch, caterer to the smart Washington dinner set, is coming to terms with her age and her son's imminent departure for college. She plays with fire and gets burned, literally as well as metaphorically: She's not caught when she's having an affair, but does pay for her indiscretion when a dessert flambe goes horribly awry at a party. Vanessa, her daughter, struggles through loving and hating both food and herself. She lives in fear of her changing body: "She had this strange desire to be experiencing anything before now, for

her body to be made small again, before it had curved and ballooned, grown dangerous and disappointing." Sharon's son Ben redubs himself "Benji" during his freshman year at Brandeis, in order to distinguish himself from his younger self. He is desperately searching for an identity and purpose beyond his high school jock persona, and hopes to discover it in political and social protest. In his quest for self-definition he clings to Rachel, a self-assured and zaftig campus activist.

Dennis Goldstein, paterfamilias, stands apart from this clan. The son of Russian Jews, Dennis works for the Department of Agriculture in the "Foreign Ag service," and finds himself caught up in embargo politics and conflicts with the Soviets in a way that ends much worse than he'd ever expected. His work life occupies most of his time, but at the end of the book, he and Sharon sneak away together from "Family Weekend" at Brandeis for what turns out to be a lovers' tryst. At the core of the cold war of familial conflict, Gilmore locates a heartbeat in Sharon's epiphany when the straying wife finds she still lusts after her husband: "Children… they bring you closer, yes, but they also separate you. They bring your bodies together, then they insist on their separation." This struggle, between the roles people are forced to play by their circumstance and the essence of who they are and want to become, is at the center of the book's keenly felt geopolitical and emotional dilemmas.

In one scene, Vanessa recalls the first time her brother played her Billy Joel's "Piano Man": "She'd first heard the song at camp, and the time Ben had played it for her had both ignited her memory of summer campfires—the stillness of the lake the campers learned to canoe on by day, the shadows of the evergreens rising along more distant shores—and seized her heart with what she did not yet know she would always search for in music: brokenness. The visceral feeling of ruin. In all its many guises."

That visceral feeling of ruin, and its attendant portent of nostalgia, is what Gilmore taps exquisitely in this book. *Something Red* is the depiction of a world teetering, with all the vertiginous fears that go with it.

JORDANA HORN

Does It Cost to Reveal the Truth?

Imagining a Holocaust experience

And the Rat Laughed, by **Nava Semel** (Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, $25.00), opens with the painful, halting voice of an elderly woman in Tel Aviv in 1999.

Trying to soften the truth of her grandmother's story.

Her granddaughter has asked her to tell her story, but she cannot find the words for her Holocaust experience of horror and abuse endured in an underground potato pit, with only a rat for company. Elements of the grandmother's story are selectively shared with the reader as she weighs the costs of revealing the truth of her suffering. Only in the next section of the novel, in which the granddaughter recounts to her teacher what she gleaned from the story, can the reader discern what the grandmother chose to tell. The grandmother has shared what she could bear to, much of it in the form of a legend, a rat-centric creation myth.

There is pathos in the granddaughter's attempt to imagine her grandmother's suffering as somewhat less awful. She cannot face the fact that her grandmother was left in a pit, so she desperately tries to soften the truth. "I mean, it must have been something special that the farmer and his wife prepared in advance. Maybe they even planned it together with her parents to make it look just like her room at home…" To the reader, who imagines the pain the grandmother suffered, the granddaughter's naivete and unreliable narration highlight the tragedy of the story.

The novel's central conceit is that the legend about the girl and the rat inspires a website of poems that in the second decade of the 21st century sparks a global phenomenon. It takes some work for the reader to believe that these poems, which comprise the third part of the novel, could have led to a movement that nearly deifies the rat. And the fourth section is also a challenge to embrace, a communique from 2099 from an anthropologist who is so moved by the story that he decides to leave the confines of his virtual society on a quest for the roots of the myth. Despite detailed exposition, the futuristic world never becomes real. The last section, an authentic voice, is the diary of the person who saved the grandmother from the people who "saved" her in the pit.

The novel is less about what actually happened to a small girl during the Holocaust than about how the memory of those events is transmitted and preserved. The grandmother's grudgingly told story, the granddaughter's imaginative and unreliable transmission of it, the poems, the anthropologist and the rediscovered diary are testament to the tenacity of the story, to its desire to be fully told even when concealed and misunderstood. It's an unsettling idea, suggesting both that the accounts we hear are mangled, as in a game of telephone, and that clarity will emerge despite those who, for malevolent or benevolent purposes, conceal the truth.

RAHEL LERNER

A Novel of the Street of Ghosts

Three Americans in Jerusalem

Wherever You Go, a new novel by **Joan Leegant** (Norton, $23.95), offers a vivid and accurate depiction of Anglo Jerusalem, particularly the diverse group of Americans who pass through the city or make it their home. In alternating chapters, Leegant focuses on three characters: Yona Stern is a 30-year-old American who comes to Israel to try to make amends with her older sister Dena, a zealous and uncompromising mother of five who lives in a West Bank settlement. Then there is Mark Greenglass, a teacher of Jewish studies undergoing a crisis of faith as he splits his time between Jerusalem (where he lives) and New York (where he earns most of his money). And finally, Aaron Blinder is an unstable college dropout involved in Adamah, an organization housed on a former kibbutz, whose members are united by their

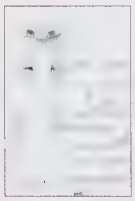
conviction that, "there was no line, green, blue, purple, or any other color, because the land was all theirs."

The lives of these three intersect on Emek Refaim, "the Valley of the Ghosts," a busy street lined with Arab-style buildings housing shops and cafes that cater to a largely American clientele. It is here that Yona runs into a high school classmate at Holy Bagel: "Yona? Yona Stern? Oh my God!"; and it is here that she sips Boz (mud-black coffee) in art galleries and finds her way into the apartment of a former boyfriend, thanks to a neighbor who becomes her new flame. It is on this street, too, that Mark Greenglass is offered a teaching position at the Olive Branch International College, an institution founded by the Scandinavian governments and enclosed by a tranquil garden. It is also here that Aaron Blinder and his friends from Adamah plot a terrifyingly misguided mission that is to alter the destinies of all of all three.

Leegant's novel is strongest in those sections featuring the aptly-named Yona (dove, in Hebrew) and her efforts to extend the olive branch of peace to her estranged sister. Against Dena's wishes, Yona makes several trips by bus and "tremp" (hitchhiking) to visit her sister and atone for stealing away Dena's boyfriend 10 years earlier. By the end of the story, Yona, who initially describes herself as a "soft American, no appetite for zealotry," realizes the lengths to which she is willing to go to defend her principles; and Dena (whose name is Hebrew for judgment) is challenged to yield some of her staunch idealism for what is perhaps a higher end. In contrast to Yona, whom the reader yearns to know better, Mark and especially Aaron are less fully realized; Aaron's story ultimately strains the limits of credibility and becomes little more than a flimsy plot device to bring these three narratives together. One cannot help wondering if it is the publishing industry's insistence that "short stories do not sell" that inspired Leegant to attempt to braid together these three tales in a

Fiction in Real Times

Twenty-first century Hasidic life in Brooklyn. The 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) in Buenos Aires. Civil rights activism in Illinois in the 1960s. Crusades and plague in eleventh-century France. Famine in the ancient Middle East. In vivid new novels for young teen readers, smart and brave young female protagonists take center stage.



Set in a contemporary cloistered Hasidic sect in Borough Park, Brooklyn, ***Hush*** (Bloombsbury, $16.99) is the debut novel by the pseudonymous **Eishes Chayil.** At age 10, Gittel, witnesses her best friend, Devory, being molested by Devory's older brother. Gittel goes on to watch helplessly Devory's unsuccessful attempts to escape repeated abuse, while all the grown-ups—parents and teachers—insist she's just misbehaving and difficult. The chapters alternate between Gittel at age 10 and at 18, when, along with the other graduates of her all-girls high school, she enters the exciting and anxious period of getting married, haunted by guilt that she did not do what she should have to save her friend.

The book describes the terrible travesty of sexual assault and the compounded betrayal from a silence motivated by a fierce wish to protect a family's good name and its children's marriage prospects. The story is leavened with humor, often born of the misunderstandings of a sheltered and parochial upbringing, as when Gittel insists to her gentile neighbor, whom she has surreptitiously befriended, that only hat-wearing Jews are allowed to enter heaven. Or when, as a new bride, she calls her relatives to let them know that her practically-still-a-stranger new husband (despite their terrified and unromantic procreative act) has taken out the garbage and is heartily congratulated by all but one aunt who asks her, "Did you want to marry a king or a garbage man? Don't be so happy!" This book overall gives a complex but not unsympathetic portrait of Hasidic life, despite its enforced isolation and alienation from mainstream American culture. One only wishes that the novel's author didn't herself feel so constrained that she conceals her own identity.

Also told with compassion and leavened with humor (trademarks of this author's other novels—*Purge*, and *Confessions of a Closet Catholic*) ***Life, After*** by **Sarah Darer Littman** is narrated by Dani, a girl whose father lost his livelihood in Argentina's 2001 economic crisis after his sister was killed in the terrorist bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. Her father, in a deep and angry depression, refuses to allow the family to accept food given away at a church though they don't have enough to eat at home. At the same time he insists they must not leave Argentina for better opportunities elsewhere. The situation challenges Dani's youthful sense of hope as she needs to become more responsible than her father, though she would rather be enjoying the attentions of her boyfriend and the pleasures of summer. Eventually the family makes its way to North America, where a boy with Asperger's syndrome is the only friend in her new high school who knows about the southern hemisphere she left behind. The easy flowing Spanish salutations and slang sprinkled throughout are a treat, and almost make the reader feel bilingual in this novel which depicts communities and chapters in Jewish history that young North American readers seldom have a chance to meet.

"greater novel" set in "Greater Israel."

Still, Leegant is to be applauded for showing us Israeli society as seen from the outside, a perspective she knows all too well: "The country was addicted, broadcasts an astounding 36 times a day, always introduced with those insistent beeps. *Beep beep beep beep, kol Yisrael m'Yerushalayim! The voice of Israel from Jerusalem!* As if everything were always an emergency. The finance minister indicted. A shooting outside a synagogue in Paris. A fact-finding visit from former American president Jimmy Carter." With Leegant as our newscaster and narrator, we would all do well to tune in.

ILANA KURSHAN

Sex Today

Dating ethics, sexual negotiation and their complications now

As someone who has worked on sex education in the Orthodox world, I was fascinated by ***Jewish Choices, Jewish Voices: Sex and Intimacy*** edited by **Elliot N. Dorff** and **Danya Ruttenberg** (Jewish Publication Society, $16.00), on issues many would be surprised to learn Judaism has a say about, including dating ethics, sexual negotiation and ethical issues around birth control and STDs.

Each section begins with open-ended questions raised by a deliberately vague case study, followed by Jewish sources which can shed light on the questions, and by a series of brief contemporary responses to the case study. Unfortunately, most contributors do not relate seriously to the sources (which themselves are far from comprehensive), and there is a lack of diversity amongst the contributors who often echo the same liberal message.

In the section on sex workers—including prostitutes, strip club dancers, phone sex operators, and pornography actors—the contemporary voices most succeed in opening up the issues and presenting multiple perspectives (though not necessarily Jewish perspectives, except inasmuch as the writer is Jewish). A case study describes a 23-year-old woman with

My Life with the Lincolns (Holt, $16.99) is a sweet, hilarious and serious debut novel by **Gayle Brandeis** set in Downers Grove, Illinois during the summer of 1966. Twelve-year-old Mina Edelman edits The Lincoln Log, her dad's furniture store newsletter, filling it with chatty items like: "When Mary Lincoln was taken off to the nuthouse, she packed up a bag full of footstools, but no one knows why. I guess she really was crazy. Just like you'll be crazy about our furniture! ABE's might even have a footstool for all of your foot-resting (or nuthouse) needs." Mina describes her family's adventures and misadventures as her dad, Abe, inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr., takes Mina along to speeches and equal-housing demonstrations, when her mother believes they're at furniture conventions. Through her fascination with trivia about the Lincoln family, Mina seizes on a series of coincidences, and is convinced—though she confides this notion only to the reader—that her family is the presidential family reincarnated. She feels burdened by the dreadful self-imposed responsibility of preventing her father's assassination, and her own and her sister's early deaths, as well as keeping her mother from going insane. This is a humorously told and nuanced story with an unusual angle on race relations and social justice that ends with an "unofficial" celebration of Mina's bat mitzvah.

Set in eleventh-century France during the Crusades, ***Elvina's Mirror*** is the second volume of a trilogy by **Sylvie Weil** (Jewish Publication Society, $14). Originally published in French, it tells about the generous, brave, learned, respected and beloved granddaughter of the medieval Bible and Talmud commentator Rashi.

Elvina keeps her own counsel, loves her cousins and girlfriends, and is admired by a diverse and interesting cast of male characters. In the first volume, *My Guardian Angel* (Scholastic), Elvina saved the life of a frightened young Christian man who went AWOL as a conscientious objector to a Crusade. In *Elvina's Mirror*, which Weil herself translated into English, the Jews of Troyes are besides themselves with contempt and fear when, they experience the plague and other mysterious misfortunes just as a family returning to Judaism after forced baptism moves into town. Elvina is determined—eventually with grandfather Rashi's help—to rescue the new family's traumatized nephew whose scholarly family was killed because they refused to be baptized. Elvina's naïve but wise attempts to help this crazed young man heal and to mend a rift in the community make this psychologically insightful novel immensely satisfying.

And, finally, a historical novel set in the era of the Book of Judges, about three millennia ago. **Selma Kritzer Silverberg** wrote ***Naomi's Song*** (Jewish Publication Society, $14) in the 1950s for her own daughter; the manuscript was re-discovered on her shelf by a hospice worker after Silverberg's death. It's a gripping story of the enormously difficult life of lone women in fortified Bethlehem and the mountains of Moab, complete with remarkably graphic details of the agrarian and shepherd life. This gritty and engaging story serves to remind us we come from a very long line of resourceful, plucky and resilient women.

NAOMI DANIS

no college education who feels herself with limited choices of employment; "She could earn $7.50/hour as a drugstore clerk without benefits... Alternatively, she could take a job as a dancer in a strip club, where she could earn significant money for minimal hours' work." In response to this case study, porn star Ron Jeremy speaks of sex work as a type of work like any other. What Jeremy seeks to whitewash into choices and ethics, Rachel Durchslang and Aimee Dinschel deconstruct from a feminist perspective, debunking each of the rosy myths about working in a strip club which were raised by the case study. Feminist scholar and activist Martha Ackelsberg thinks about the larger societal questions: "No one has 'clean hands' in a society where some are effectively forced into sex work by the lack of viable alternatives." And until we are able to fix those societal ills, "'choices' about sex work are rightly on the consciences of all of us."

As the editors claim at the outset, this book is far from exhaustive; masturbation, adultery, sexual abuse, and casual sex are barely mentioned. However, this book tries to do the hard work of integrating tradition and modernity, and thus echoes the important point made by the Talmudic story of Rav Kahana who hides under his teacher's bed with the hope of learning how to have sex: "This too is Torah and I must learn it."

JENNIE ROSENFELD

Silicon Valley Sisters

Allegra Goodman updates Austen

There are some homes that I visit that feel instantly comfortable to me. Maybe it's the smells wafting through the rooms or the eclectic array of books on the shelves—*A Tale of Two Cities* crammed next to *Sefer Ha'agadah*. Elements may be distinctive but nothing is too far out of my comfort zone. It is as if I'm thinking, "I've never tried this recipe but I'd love to add it to my collection." ***The Cookbook Collector*** by **Allegra Goodman** (Dial Press, $25.00), inhabited this same space for me, the familiar house in which I easily and happily feel at home.

Goodman's latest novel (after *Intuition, The Family Markowitz* and others) is the story of two sisters, Emily and Jess, set against the backdrop of the digital revolution of the 1990s. The story follows their trials and triumphs in work, family, and love. Emily, the elder, is ambitious and accomplished, the CEO of an Internet startup company. Set as her sister's foil, Jess is a free-spirit, more concerned with saving the world's trees than making money grow on them.

Goodman strikingly overturns the dichotomy she presents; true to life, the flighty sister can be amazingly grounded—Jess catalogues a collection of antique cookbooks—and the methodical sister finds joy in the occasional experiment. Goodman highlights the emotional see-saw between sisters: I'll stay up when you need to go down.

Why Does It Matter Where I Pray?

Where shall I daven today? I've been asking myself this question each Shabbat for the better part of two decades. While I was raised in the liberal-hippie-fully egalitarian world of the *havurah* movement, I am also an alumna of a modern Orthodox day school in which women held few ritual roles and sat separated from the men during prayer. And so I continually find myself caught between competing values in finding a prayer space. How do I reconcile counting myself in a minyan (quorum of ten required for a prayer group) with Orthodox understandings of Jewish law? What service and community is most conducive to my personal *kavvanah* (prayerful intention)? How can I best use my talents as a *ba'alat tefillah*, a prayer leader, to honor God and support my community in prayer?

Over the years, I have been a regular attendee at Orthodox services, a coordinator of traditional women's *tefillah* groups, a participant in liberal *havurot*, a Torah reader at a modern Orthodox "partnership minyan," and most recently a *gabbait* (coordinator) of an egalitarian minyan in Jerusalem. I wrestle with matching my egalitarian values and my commitment to traditional practice and ideology; I seek to find spirited communities whose members share my many values. And wherever I choose to go, I second-guess myself: why is this where I want to daven?

It was illuminating to find two recent books that explore these issues from very different perspectives. The edited collection published by the groundbreaking activists at the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA), ***Women and Men in Communal Prayer: Halakhic Perspectives*** (Ktav, $24.95, ed. Trachtman; Sperber, Shapiro, Shochetman, Riskin, and Ross, contributors), provides several contemporary legal responsa on women's roles and rights in traditional Orthodox minyanim. In his autobiography-cum-manifesto, ***Empowered Judaism: What Independent Minyanim Can Teach Us about Building Vibrant Jewish Communities*** (Jewish Lights, $18.99), **Elie Kaunfer** shows the ways that "independent minyanim"—groups unconnected to any particular denomination or synagogue—create meaningful communal prayer. Together, these books illuminate many of the key issues and values that are used to build ritual communities.

About 10 years ago, feminism and Orthodoxy came to a decisive clash. Liberal-minded women (and men) were no longer satisfied with traditional services that disenfranchise women,

or with separatist women's *tefillah* services. With legal backing from an anonymous source (later revealed to be Rabbi Mendel Shapiro), the "partnership minyan" was born: a community where women can read Torah, be called to bless the Torah, and lead certain (less essential) parts of the service. The essays in *Women and Men in Communal Prayer* give two lengthy responsa defending such services and two rejecting the methodology.

The articles pivot on an understanding of a key concept in *halakhic* (legal) reasoning: *kevod ha-tsibbur*, the dignity of the community. While rabbinic sources use the idea of not offending the dignity of the community to curtail women's participation, Rabbis Sperber and Shapiro redefine this principle. In our modern world, where women are teachers of Torah, presidents of corporations, and Supreme Court justices, a woman's participation in synagogue is not a disgrace to the community's dignity. Rather, her enfranchisement is a necessary aspect of fulfilling the mitzvah of *kevod ha-briyyot*, respecting the dignity of all of God's creations. In their responsa, Prof. Shochetman and Rabbi Riskin reject this line of reasoning, positing that *kevod ha-tsibbur* is a fixed concept that does not change with time and one that cannot be overridden.

This is a dense book of technical halakhic arguments; each rabbi brings the same sources to support his own side of the argument. While I admire the intellectual honesty of JOFA in choosing to include both positions, it left me with the feeling that either side could logically be argued—that the "right answer" depends on which values one already holds. Furthermore, while I appreciated the masterful introduction from Dr. Tamar Ross, I sat somewhat uneasily with the all-male lineup of scholars. I know that in the Orthodox world, women are rarely recognized as *poskot*, legal decisors. But I eagerly await the day when decisions about women in prayer can be made by women and men together, rather than legislated by the men on high.

The overarching concerns of *Women and Men in Communal Prayer* are about communal dignity and standards. In a very different way, Rabbi Elie Kaunfer discusses creating communal space in his fast-paced and readable manifesto, *Empowered Judaism*. The framing narrative of the work is the founding of Kehilat Hadar in New York City, a traditional egalitarian "independent minyan" that started around the same time as the first partnership minyanim were cropping up. Recounting the decisions made by the minyan's founders, Kaunfer outlines the ways that a nascent community can unite participants to create vibrant davening space, and includes essays by leaders of other independent minyanim detailing concerns and solutions from their particular communities. While I found some of the narrative sections self-congratulatory [full disclosure: I know Kaunfer and several of the Hadar leaders personally], practical tips on improving a minyan's quality were clear and useful; even the setup of chairs in a room can help the prayer experience.

Kaunfer explains how independent minyanim differ from both *havurot* and synagogues. The emphasis seems misplaced. In every generation—and in the "old country" as well—Jewish communities have sought to create open davening spaces, to increase *kavvanah*, to enfranchise participants. Independent minyanim—and partnership minyanim—are the current vogue, led by a well-educated laity, but they share the same core values of their predecessors.

Kehilat Hadar is a fully egalitarian community, as are a large number of the independent minyan counted in this demographic. Kaunfer mentions egalitarianism only in passing, perhaps in an effort to keep partnership minyanim and other modern Orthodox communities under his umbrella. In my experience, gender dynamics—who are the *gabbaim*, who speaks from the pulpit, who leads and reads Torah and sets up kiddush—are key unstated parts of every community, whether fully egalitarian or not. I think the assumption that egalitarian worship will necessarily lead to egalitarian communities is flawed: nearly all the leaders of the independent minyan movement are charismatic *men*.

I write this essay as I prepare to begin rabbinical school at a non-denominational seminary, something unthinkable to my 15-year-old yeshiva girl self. What inspires my leadership in the observant Jewish world are the communities described in these books: places where I can be enfranchised, where I can struggle with my role as a woman and as a Jew, where I share values with my fellow daveners. These books illuminate a time of deep engagement with the issues surrounding prayer communities, one that we only hope brings us closer to the Divine Source of Blessing.

SARA N.S. MEIROWITZ

The novel also speaks of a familiar, not-so-distant past. Goodman poignantly portrays the disappointment and disillusionment of the earlier part of this decade: "Looking back, analysts could predict the crash. They spoke of weak fundamentals, softening in the tech sector, reckless speculation. But who can measure appetite, or predict the limits of desire? Who can chart love's parabola, from acquaintance to infatuation to estrangement?" This is a question that both sisters must answer: Emily's boyfriend owns his own startup in Boston, confident that they are all going to be rich someday soon; and Jess finds herself increasingly close to her boss, a retired Microsoft millionaire turned antiquarian bookseller. The cycles of boom and bust, love and lust and loss, are brilliantly dramatized in this novel about seeking connection in the Internet age.

HADAR SCHWARTZ

The Hearing and the Deaf

Listening in on two worlds

What does it mean to have a voice, to hear a voice, to give voice in public to private thoughts? Those questions carry particular significance for **Jennifer Rosner**, the hearing mother of two daughters who were born deaf. In her unusual and affecting parenting memoir, ***If a Tree Falls: A Family's Quest to Hear and Be Heard***

($16.95), part of the Feminist Press' Reuben/Rifkin Jewish Women Writers Series, Rosner grapples with practical medical issues while also pondering her family's history of silence and secrecy.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the family secret is a generations-long history of deafness. It is only after the arrival of Rosner's older daughter, Sophia, that her father presents to her, without comment, a copy of the family tree on which the names of six relatives are marked with an asterisk standing for "deaf and dumb." In addition, Rosner begins to question if her mother's progressive hearing difficulties—she had started wearing hearing aids while still in her thirties—was the result of the early adulthood illness she always claimed, or also had a genetic basis. And then there is Rosner's own sense that, throughout her childhood and growing up, her mother had never "heard" her, whether literally or emotionally.

In a style that balances straightforwardness with delicacy, Rosner details the struggles and strategies that she and her husband underwent in figuring out how to bond together as a family that belongs to two worlds—the hearing and the deaf. They relocated from California to Massachusetts to have access to specialized schools and hired tutors who could teach the entire family sign language. And before deciding to say yes to a cochlear implant—a surgically implanted electronic device that provides a sense of sound—for their younger daughter, Juliet, whose deafness is even more profound than that of her sister, they versed themselves in the controversial issues centering on the very way we think about deafness: Is it a disability that physicians should treat through surgical implants or hearing aids? Or should we respect deafness as a culture distinct from that of the hearing world—and condemn surgical implants as a weapon of destruction of the deaf community? For Rosner, a practical middle ground based on her children's particular needs clearly trumps narrow ideology, and she is not afraid to stand up to those who would second guess her.

Rosner intertwines this narrative with her search for information about her mostly forgotten deaf relatives, now deceased. Unable to uncover more than a few facts even with the help of a distant cousin, she decides to write a fictional account of their lives in a Galician shtetl in the late nineteenth century and on New York's Lower East Side at the turn of the twentieth. In imagining how they resolved practical problems arising from their deafness, and religious questions about God's intentions, she believes she will find ways to help her children as they face their own challenges. Rosner clearly derived solace and comfort from this exercise, but the writing is not altogether convincing as fiction. What is striking nonetheless is Rosner's determination to discover an authenticity and individuality to her own voice. For only then, she suggests, will she be able to teach her daughters the importance of making themselves heard, both metaphorically and literally. It is an issue to which Rosner, throughout her memoir, speaks loud and clear.

DIANE COLE

Our Reviewers

DIANE COLE, author of the memoir After Great Pain: A New Life Emerges, is a contributing editor for U.S. News & World Report and book columnist for The Psychotherapy Networker.

SHIRA ENGEL, founder of and writer for fromtherib.wordpress.com, writes on Jewish and feminist issues and is headed to Wesleyan University in the fall.

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SARA N. S. MEIROWITZ is a writer, editor, teacher, and gabbait. A Wexner Graduate Fellow, she is a rabbinical student at Hebrew College Rabbinical School in Newton, MA.

JENNIE ROSENFELD, PH.D. is co-author of a sex manual for observant newlywed couples (forthcoming); she co-founded and directed the Tzelem project, which provided sex education and resources to the Orthodox community.

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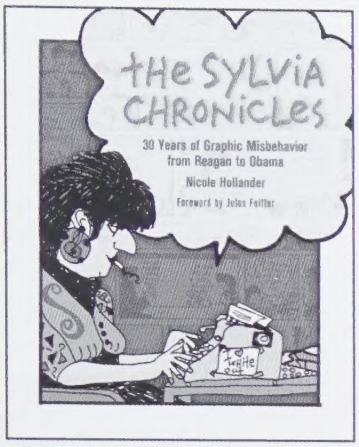
THE SYLVIA CHRONICLES
30 Years of Graphic Misbehavior from Reagan to Obama
Nicole Hollander
Foreword by Jules Feiffer

The Sylvia Chronicles

Nicole Hollander

30 Years of Graphic Misbehavior from Reagan to Obama

"The most outspokenly feminist cartoonist in mainstream publication."
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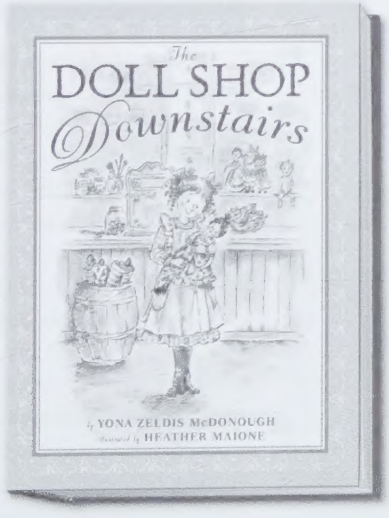

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HAPPENING

"Various Illuminations (of a Crazy World)"

Maira Kalman is best known for her post 9/11 New Yorker cover portraying the neighborhoods of New York City as "stans." This show contains sketches, illustrations, photographs, paintings and more—from 30 years of Kalman's work. Dozens of inspirational objects from the home and studio of this Israeli-born New Yorker are here too: language books, antique buckets, shoes, buttons, chairs, ladders, tea cups, jackets, rags stained with paint. A discarded sofa on a sidewalk prompted the artist to paint a series of sofa still lifes, while a girlfriends' road trip inspired Kalman to take up needlepoint. "A psychic concluded my reading by saying, 'Don't cry over spilt milk,' and I said, 'That's all you've got?'" Kalman recalls. "So I started embroidering clichés." Anything Jewish about her work? "Maybe there's a kind of sadness, and a sense of humor that maybe seems particularly New York, or particularly Jewish." This exhibition, created by Ingrid Schaffner for the Institute for Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, is at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco (*thecjm.org*) through Oct. 26; then you can catch it at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, *skirball.org*.

Shalom Bayit: Justice for Domestic Workers

Restoring dignity and improving conditions for domestic workers—nannies, eldercare givers, housekeepers, and others—Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and Domestic Workers United celebrated a major legislative victory in July. The New York State Assembly and Senate passed the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, which includes provisions for overtime pay, one day of rest per week, three paid days off after one year of work and addresses the issue of sexual harassment. For more information: *jfrej.org*.

Fighting Cancer with Song Downloads?

Musical artists like Pharoah's Daughter, Emily Bindiger, Neshama Carlebach, Tovah Feldshuh, Abbi Rose, and Karen Rosen interpret folksongs from the days of Israel's founding as part of an ambitious plan to revive pioneering songs of many nations. The project's parallel purpose is to raise money for organizations fighting cancer. For more about this effort "to cultivate and present genuinely innovative—even subversive—arts projects that promote the trans-denominational, universal values of social justice, kindness and charity" listen in at *PioneersForACure.org*.

"Economica: Women and the Global Economy"

and "Imagining Ourselves, Women, Power and Politics" are two exhibits you can view and contribute to at an innovative online social-change museum amplifying the voices of women worldwide. With its unique focus on cultural change, the International Museum of Women advances the human right to gender equity worldwide. *imow.org*

Etty Hillesum

was a worker in Amsterdam's Jewish Council, and a Rilke-inspired writer who, in 1943, joined her fellow Jews on the three-day eastward journey that ended at Auschwitz. Using only the words of Hillesum's own diaries and letters, Susan Stein created and performs this one-woman play in schools and other venues. *Ettytheplay.org*

Memory of a Time I Did Not Know

Artist and poet Miriam Mörsel Nathan draws the viewer into her quest to connect to the many members of her family lost in the Holocaust. For example, says Nathan, "In making monotypes of my aunt Greta, I suddenly realized I didn't know what color her dress was in the photograph on which I was basing my work. In fact, I didn't know what colors she liked—a detail that points to a much larger issue, which is that I don't know much about my aunt at all. The series of screen prints is of the same dress but in many different colors, as if to say to my Aunt Greta—*which of these do you like*? There is little that I know about my aunt. What I do know, however, is that my aunt Greta Mörsel Braun was deported on April 29, 1942. These walls of many dresses

The Bowls Project

Composer, vocalist and lay cantor Jewlia Eisenberg founded the music ensemble Charming Hostess in 1998, with its mission "to make lovely noise about complex ideas." Based on inscriptions from Babylonian Jewish amulets known as demon bowls, the Bowls Project sings of sex, ritual and secrets of the home, giving voice especially to our Babylonian female forebears: their relationships, desires and dreams. *Charminghostess.us*

The Naming

Singer and composer Galeet Dardashti is the first woman in her family to continue the family's tradition of distinguished Persian and Jewish musicianship. The leader of the edgy all-female Mizrahi band Divahn, Dardashti has a new solo project that sings of why the brilliant Queen of Sheba shaved her legs, how the stunning Vashti laid down the line for her drunken husband, and how a mysterious witch spoke King Saul's doom and then served him a nice dinner. Then she uses words from the prayer said upon wrapping phyllacteries to tell about the biblical Michal and about her own great-aunt Tovah. *galeetdardashti.com*

remind me of what I don't know." At the Ann Loeb Bronfman Gallery at the Washington DC JCC Sept 15 – Dec 17. *www.flickr.com/photos/51647528@N02*

Women and Jewish Poetry

In this rich Spring 2010 volume of the academic journal Nashim (Hebrew for women) editor Kathryn Hellerstein interleaves poems with an array scholarly articles, beginning with Ann Lapidus Lerner on the roles of Eve and the Garden of Eden in poems by Americans Linda Pastan and Kim Chernin and Israeli poets Techiyah Bat-Oren and Ruhama Weiss. Then: Wendy Zierler explores "Race and Gender in Modern Hebrew Poems about Numbers 12," where Miriam responds to Moses's "taking" a Cushite woman; Niza Kann discusses images from the Zohar in the poetry of Zelda; Naomi Brenner offers "Slippery Selves: Rachel Bluvstein and Anna Margolin in Poetry and in Public." There's more: Montreal's Yiddish women poets, an article on translations of Else Lasker-Schuler, Muriel Rukeyser's ethics of identity; orphanhood in the work of Dahlia Ravikovitch, and the politics of appropriation in poetry by women kabbalah scholars. *nashim@schechter.ac.il.*

Jewish Fiction

It's a new online journal devoted exclusively to—no surprise—fiction on Jewish themes, the brainchild of Toronto-based writer Nora Gold. It launches with a fall 2010 issue and aims to showcase contemporary Jewish writing—either written in, or translated into, English—and create a virtual home for writers and readers around the world. Submissions are invited. *jewishfiction.net*

The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe

online edition has launched, women included. In his preface to the 2008 print edition of the encyclopedia, editor in chief Gershon Hundert wrote, "From the beginning of the project the editors have been most conscious of the necessity to redress the imbalance in the attention devoted to the depiction of women who are often ignored in studies of the region." Many interesting items have been added to the online version, including audio, video and a wonderful essay on gender by Paula Hyman. *yivoencyclopedia.org*

Better Beans

American Jewish World Service, partnering with Equal Exchange, enables congregations, organizations, and individuals to buy top-quality coffee beans and chocolate while supporting the efforts of small growers and co-operatives in the developing world. To stay in business and feed their families, small- and medium-scale farmers must receive fair prices for their crops and have access to affordable credit. Equal Exchange creates a global market for these farmers. And now a portion of every pound of coffee or chocolate purchased through Better Beans will go to support AJWS's Fighting Hunger from the Ground Up campaign. *www.equalexchange.coop/ajws*

Yerusha

is an organization started by Anna Olswanger to bring together Jewish women and men past the usual childbearing age who are childless not by choice and believe they may never have children biologically or by adoption. Yerusha (Hebrew for inheritance) offers individuals an unusual opportunity to explore with others, online and in the real world, the meaning and experience of being a childless Jewish adult, to help each other discover ways to create a legacy for future generations. *Yerusha.com*

For events and projects taking place between issues of Lilith, check out WHAT'S NEW at *Lilith.org*, and sign up for Lilith's free e-mail newsletter. Send suggestions for this section to *info@Lilith.org*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

SELLING CHILDREN FOR SEX

by ELIZABETH MANDEL

AS MANY AS 1.2 MILLION CHILDREN WORLDWIDE ARE TRAFFICKED FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EVERY YEAR. In Cambodia, one third of the country's 55,000 sex workers are between 12 and 17. The just-released documentary film, "Redlight," focuses on five Cambodian children, four girls and a boy, as they recount their horrific experiences. These children's stories vary in detail, but share too many things in common: all four girls were trafficked by people they knew, either tricked by a neighbor into thinking they were going to the city to see a sibling or find well-paid work, or sold outright by a parent. Their shared experiences include repeated rape, torture, captivity, subjugation to fear and intimidation, having their hymens sewn and re-sewn to fetch, over and over again, a high price for their virginity.

The camera captures something else they have in common; haunted eyes overwhelming their smooth, unlined children's faces. Despite having escaped or having been rescued, they are faced with obstacles beyond the already enormous challenges of recovering physically and psychologically. They are being returned to a society in which they will be stigmatized, rejected and shamed. Susan Bissell, Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF, author Kevin Bates and narrator Lucy Liu examine the cultural factors affecting both the prevalence of trafficking and the fact that justice and reintegration into society seem almost impossible for its victims

Communities where trafficking originates share poverty, corruption, the undervaluation of female children and, of course, demand—often heightened by tourism. In recent years, HIV/AIDS has increased the demand for virgins, and therefore for children. Survivors of trafficking are heavily stigmatized, so for those few who are brave and resilient enough to press charges, court cases are extremely difficult to win. Traffickers can persist in their highly lucrative trade without fear of retribution. In Cambodia, history adds an additional set of factors: 30 years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodians are still feeling the ravages of Pol Pot. Families torn apart, a lack of trust among neighbors, migration back to cities emptied during that period, an extremely young population (approximately 50% below age 20) with few job opportunities.

At great personal risk, grass-roots activist Somaly Mam, herself a survivor of child trafficking, and prominent politician and women's rights advocate Mu Sochua have taken the children of Redlight, and thousands of others, under their protective wings. From supporting rescue operations to providing emotional counseling and legal advice, they are the voices of hope, struggling to overhaul a system that has failed its most vulnerable. While laws exist that purport to protect children, the laws on the books clearly do not work. We learn how a court ruled that seven men who raped and cut open with a knife a seven-year-old girl because she was too small were released because they were old and would suffer in jail, whereas the girl, in the words of the judge, was young and would forget all about it. Both Somaly Man and Mu Sochua are demanding policy changes, including education, enforcement, assistance and protection. (For their efforts, they were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009. We learn in a tragic endnote to the film that Somaly Mam's 14-year-old daughter was kidnapped and raped in retaliation for her mother's activism.)

Israeli directors Guy Jacobson and Adi Ezroni took considerable risks to ensure the careful documentation in "Redlight," which includes hidden camera footage from inside Cambodian brothels. The film notes the global responsibility for putting an end to this problem, including wider adoption of extraterritorial laws, so countries can prosecute their own nationals and residents who travel to other countries for the sexual exploitation of children; and the necessity for the United Nations, governments and multinational corporations to work together. This demand for international cooperation comes just as the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) is expected to come to a vote in the U.S. Congress this fall, after having failed to do so through the three sessions since it was introduced in 2007. "Redlight" paints a bleak picture of child trafficking and sex slavery, but it also offers a powerful case for taking strong action to make change.

Communities where trafficking originates share poverty, corruption, undervaluation of females—and demand, often heightened by tourism.

The great hero of the film is Rena, the teenage sister of Sokha, one of the girls tricked into prostitution. Over the course of the film, we learn how Rena found her sister, rescued her from a brothel, defied convention by standing by her, encouraged other girls from her village abducted by the same team to join her in pressing charges, and successfully took the kidnappers to court. In a rare victory, thanks to Rena's unwavering resolve, the trafficker was sentenced to 14 years in prison, and the brothel owner to 18 years. But Sokha, in addition to her's many challenges, has "lost her soul." She is addicted to drugs, traumatized and in shock. In one of the most moving scenes of the film, we watch Sokha undergo a ritual to recover her soul. Despite her sister's efforts, Sokha eventually returns to a life of prostitution, but Rena, inspiringly, fights on. ■

Elizabeth Mandel is a documentary filmmaker with a special interest in women's empowerment and gender-based violence. She co-directed the 2010 documentary "Pushing the Elephant," about a Congolese mother and daughter.